THE SON OF THE SWORDMAKER

OPIE READ

The Son of the Swordmaker

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ALL WAS SILENT SAVE FOR THE WAR-CHANT.

The Son *of the* Swordmaker

A Romance by
OPIE READ

AUTHOR OF
"'Turkey Egg' Griffin," "The Harkriders,"
"The Starbucks," "Old Ebenezer,"
"A Kentucky Colonel,"
"A Tennessee Judge," "My Young Master,"
"Len Gansett," "The Jucklins,"
"The Colossus,"
Etc., Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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A MAIDEN TALL AND SPLENDID.

The Son of the Swordmaker

CHAPTER I

In the Eternal City

I WAS born in Rome. In that city my father was a maker of swords. During his earlier life he was a soldier, serving in many parts of the world, and although he was, as I firmly believe, a valiant fighter for the Empire, yet he attained to no marked degree of preferment. Under an act of the Senate, a soldier who had served a certain number of years was not only granted the freedom of honorable retirement from the army, but was presented with a grant of land in some new-founded colony where, as a citizen, he might spend the remainder of his days. But such a life did not appeal to him. Out of Rome was out of the world for a Roman. One who had given the best years of his life to the sword could not hope to rival in business one who had been trained in those affairs whereby men gather riches. As my father had naught to look forward to save a mere existence and an old age of rusted

faculties, he took what money was coming to him, turned his land grant into precious metal, and making his way back to Rome, set up a small forge for the making of swords.

In youth he had been apprenticed to a maker of war weapons, and now, in the full vigor of his mind, his skill soon returned to him; and, as he was assisted by one of the best workmen in the Empire, old Calo, who better than any one else knew the secret of tempering steel, the fame of his swords spread abroad. Within a few years the shop had so expanded as to be noted as one of the industrial features of Rome; but his ambition, instead of finding satisfaction, constantly grew beyond his attainment. It was not enough to possess gold and slaves and to own a villa. Social distinction and the Senate were still denied him. To be a real lord of man's universe did not depend upon wealth alone. Out of some brave and lucky chance in the army one might arise from lowness to a triumph; but it was for the most part the distinction of family that set one man above another. My father, however, married a patrician, though the divorced wife of a Senator, and I was born at a time when he was in the full tide of his wealth, though he was as far as ever from attaining his social aims; for, though my mother could entertain him with the stories

of the great life from which she had been thrust, she could not unchain a door for him to enter. That a man who had lived so rugged a life should be so weak as to demand the recognition and the flatteries of degenerates was resented by old Calo, the foreman of the great factory, and often while he was showing me the new swords and the bucklers, he would rave and tell me that my father was a fool.

Once he stood with me in his arms, while a troop was passing, and he asked me if I were going to make swords or use them, and when I answered that I was going to be a soldier, he hugged me close and in my ear he almost shouted: "Yes, and to go into the Senate with your sword in your hand; not to be of these feeble wretches, but to cut their throats."

One of the workmen, a mean fellow and a spy, overheard Calo, and straightway he went to the authorities with a complaint. The old man was arrested that day, and though my father strove to save him, yet he was condemned to death. Just before he was led forth to execution he asked that he might see me, the only human being whom he loved; and the request was granted, though we were not to talk alone, lest he might say something to poison my mind. I thought that he was going to rail against the powers that were to shed

his blood, but he did not. He took me tenderly in his arms, and told me where he had hidden a sword made especially for me; hilt inlaid with gold and set with pearls. When I began to weep he held me aloft so that he might look up into my face, and said: "Little Eradmus, you must not cry. Look down and see how white my hair is, and know, then, that they are to rob me of but little more than a day. Can we not all afford to give a day to them that crave it?"

Though Calo was so instrumental in my father's prosperity, so far as I could see, there was but little regret at his death. On the morning after the burning of the body, my father, as was now his assumed custom, was borne in his litter on the shoulders of his slaves into the Forum, where he turned from the great world market, where every conceivable thing was sold, to the places apart from trade where the rhetoricians, both old and young, came to listen to the music of their own voices. Oratory was so essential that the man who could not harangue was doomed to be cheated of more than half his success in life. Every ceremony and almost every service, no matter how simple, was prefaced with a speech. Generals and even centurions harangued the soldiers, and masters made speeches to their slaves, laying down their

duties and telling them how thankful they ought to be that the gods had so favored them as to take from them their worthless freedom and to permit them to become the property of a Roman.

The patricians smiled at one another when my father appeared, yet he would persist in seeking to be among them. Sometimes he essayed to speak, and he spoke well, telling of the exploits of his legion; but it was rare that he was favored with a kindly ear, for the patricians sneered at his presumption and the plebeians resented his rise from among them.

I think that it must have been the third day after the death of Calo when my father, seeming to take pity on my grief, said that he had designed to make me a present. I did not inquire as to what it might be, but in obedience to his command I went with him to the Forum. Here we passed through the great mart where hoarse men were shouting their bargains, and entered the Temple of Castor, the human market, where upon scaffolds were exposed for sale hundreds of women and children. We halted in front of a platform where a burly auctioneer was crying the virtues of a Greek boy, somewhat older than myself, a handsome youth in whose sad eyes were pictures of a starry night in his native land. You who read this must know that with the rest of

my race, the great Roman public, I had no real heart such as you may possess. I had wept over Calo and I would have wept over the loss of a dog, but I knew not the meaning of human wretchedness. To look with dry eye upon misery was a virtue. Power was a gracious privilege extended by the gods to the chosen ones of earth. Weakness was a mark of the Fates' displeasure. I admired the beautiful eyes of this boy, and his antics beneath the sharp lashings of the auctioneer, as he leaped about to show his agility, were a source of amusement to me. He uttered a cry and the auctioneer shouted:

"Listen to the sweetness of that voice! Can he not regale you with music at dinner? See how he can jump! Did you ever behold such activity?"

My father bought him, and when a small chain had been put about his neck I led him home in triumph. At the portals of all great houses the janitor and a mighty mastiff were chained, one on each side, both to remain there until death, or to be sold with the house or burnt with it in case of fire. When I entered, leading the boy, the mastiff growled and the old man sadly shook his head. The little fellow could speak no Latin and I knew no Greek, and together in my room we had but a lonesome time of it. Poor little thing!

He watched where I had hidden his chain, and one morning when I awoke he was dead, having hanged himself with it.

As I now remember, it did not seem that my mother was very tender toward me. She was a sad woman, and in nothing did she seem to find a pleasure. Stately and cold, she presided at our feasts; and on the day of the festival of Bona Dea she would give way to fits of secret weeping, as it must have reminded her of a time when she was the wife of a real, not a pretended member of the Senate.

I remember that in the dusk of one evening we were sitting near the fountain. It had been the day of Lupercal, and naked men had shouted in the street. My father, bestial from wine, had coarsely berated her, and now that he was in a drunken slumber she sat here with me, apart from all the world. The fountain was lowly murmuring. She placed her hand on my shoulder as I stood near her and told me of a little boy that had died; and, filled with jealous rage, I cried out that if he had not died I would have killed him. Young as I was, I had received lessons in military training, and this declaration sprang from my first hardening toward all things that might stand in my way. She pushed me from her, and I believe that had I fallen

into the pool she would have suffered me to drown.

On the following morning a naked man was found dead in the street, just beyond our door. One of our slaves whispered to me that he had been the slaughterer, and I was so much enamored of his prowess that I brought him sweetmeats and gave to him a steel mirror that he might study the features of his valiant countenance.

How keen a delight it was to go to the Campus Martius and watch them fling the javelin and gaze upon the strong men buffeting the waves of the Tiber! But I did not care to hear the poets declaim, though they sang of war, for it was all so tame compared with the deed itself. My father strove to impress me with the truth that it was almost as essential to tell of the deed as to do it; that those who sing make weak men great; but I cared not for the poet nor for the orator, an indifference that must have arisen from the fact that I could not paint with words. It must have been the discovery that I was not akin to any of the intellectual graces that put me out of favor with my mother. She was from a race of orators as well as soldiers, and it was her ambition that I should shine with double luster. She said that I could never be so distinguished as our cook, who had achieved

the distinction of preparing a pig so that it would be boiled on one side and roasted on the other.

I recall an old soldier who gave me great encouragement when he arose once in the Forum and began by declaring that he was rough and could ill use the phrases that had made some men great; but from his fumbling about for words he suddenly arose among the very stars of expression and shamed me by making a most eloquent speech. It was a trick they had, to declare that they were not given to speech-making and then to astonish every one with their power.

"He will learn arms anyway. Compel him to know rhetoric," my father said to my teacher, and as my lack of aptitude was often mistaken for stubbornness I was sometimes punished. I remember a severe chastisement for a trifling offense. The great lumbering chariots were drawn by oxen, and once when I inquired of my father why they were not drawn by horses, he flew off into a harangue: "Don't you know that it would be a sacrilege to draw a chariot with horses except when consuls or other great men are going to view the sacrifice, or for triumphs, or when the chariots contain the images of the gods?" And for this ignorance he beat me and sent word to my teacher that he was remiss in his duty toward me.

In Rome there was so much to remember and it was so hard to remember everything; but sometimes the want of a word branded one as a plebeian, and this was what father could not endure. As time passed he did not improve. A man's disposition grows sweeter or sourer as old age approaches; sweeter if he be a philosopher and sourer if he be a man of vanity; and my father's constant desire to be taken for what he was not, proved him vain. Gradually, too, the importance of his workshop began to decline. During the time when Calo was alive whole legions had been armed with our blades, but the secret of tempering the steel had gone with him into ashes, and our swords began to fall into disrepute. The man who reported on Calo had told father that he possessed the secret, but this was soon proved to be not true, and I was not sorry afterward to learn that this was the man who had been found dead near our house, nor did it lessen my father in my regard when I learned that he was the cause of the assassination. Complaint was made against our swords. One night a messenger came from the Emperor. With great ceremony father received him. He handed father a parchment and departed. Mother came forward.

"It has come," said father. Then he ordered a slave to prepare the bath. Mother

said nothing. She walked off a short distance and I made bold to ask her what had happened. "Your father is under the imperial frown," she whispered. Just then he called me to him. With bowed head I approached, feeling that I was in the presence of death.

"Look up!" he commanded, and I obeyed him. "I don't know how much will be left for you when the government and the creditors are satisfied, but whatever there is, take it and spend it on your education."

Mother overheard him, but she said nothing. He had spoken no word of provision for her, and glancing at her I saw her tremble, but she did not speak.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"I want it to be your aim in life to shame those who have stood in the path of my advancement."

"Yes, sir," I answered, wondering if he were going to leave instructions to my teacher to beat me. He did not put his hand on my head. He did not touch me. The slave came forth, groveling, and announced that the bath was prepared. Mother approached slowly. Father met her. They embraced without a word and so they separated. One of the servants took me out of the house. We walked about the streets, and when we returned they told me that father was dead.

CHAPTER II

The Old Egyptian

THERE was very little left after the government and the creditors were satisfied. We removed to a small house far from the triumphal entry ways of Rome, and the shouts that reached us seemed as the faint echoes of a world that was gone forever. Here we lived with but one servant, an Egyptian slave, a wise old man, who looked like one of the mummies taken from the mysterious caves of his country. Learned in most languages and in nearly all things, he would assist me with my studies, but with all this I was slow and it was with difficulty that I could understand. The tasks set for me, the great orations, almost split my head, which in a frail boy would have been natural enough, but I was large for my age and so strong that my companions envied me. I was a leader in all sorts of bodily sports, and once when wrestling I threw a boy older than myself and broke his neck. Of course I could not be held in blame, especially as the boy was of no family to speak of, but

instead of showing sorrow I was rather arrogant over my prowess.

It seemed that my mother was better contented after the death of my father, and I remember that of a summer's evening she would sit beneath the ilex tree, before our humble door, and sing a strange, sweet song, always the same; but she was not more affectionate toward me, appearing to regard me as a link that bound her to a pretentious and vulgar life which she had ever despised. Sometimes when an idea would seem to reflect a light upon the dark background of my almost universal ignorance, she would smile her approval but never once did she stimulate my pride by telling me that she expected me to become a great man.

One afternoon when I returned from school she met me at the door and, in a way strangely confused for one of such self-command, she asked me if I would not go somewhere else to remain during the night. Just then, from within the larger of the two rooms, I heard a feeble voice calling her. Without saying a word or without even casting another look upon me, she turned about hastily and entered the room; and I followed her, wondering, for in our retirement there came no visitors.

Upon entering, I saw her supporting the head of an old man that lay upon a couch.

He was struggling for breath, and with wine she was seeking to revive him. I stood there, looking on, and when, after a time, she had eased him down and was fanning him, I asked her who he was, but she bade me keep silence. I did so, for a long time, and when at last the old man appeared to be in a natural sleep she came to me and led me into the other room and, looking hard into my eyes, she asked me if I could keep a secret.

I told her that I had never been known to tell things that ought not to be known; and, thus assured, she told me that the old man was her former husband, the Senator who had divorced her. He had been disgraced and banished and now he had stolen again to Rome, to his only friend, the woman whom he had abused, to die in her arms. She said that if the authorities knew he had returned they would drag him forth and murder him; and, obeying her, I told the Egyptian that the old man was my uncle who had returned from Greece.

As the days passed, he so far regained his strength as to sit up and to talk, and he talked marvelously, that old orator, of the triumphs he had won when he was a boy, and of the first speech in the Senate that had made him famous. When he related this my mother apologized for me, as my face must have

shown no sign of gladness at the recital, and feeling the insult, for such it was to me, I replied that I was as one who loved music but could not chant. This pleased him, and he said to her that she had nothing to fear for my mind, which assured me that when I was not present she had talked to him of my stupidity.

One day when mother was gone out to make some purchases I sat with him. He resented the need of her going on so mean an errand, but when I assured him that as much as we trusted the Egyptian in ordinary things, we could not with safety give him a commission that involved the handling of money, he smiled and declared it was that way with nearly all peoples. He told me that some of the most learned of the Greeks were dishonest, and that Demosthenes, whom our own great Cicero had thought the greatest of orators, gave himself not to justice but to the side that paid over the most money. During a long time I let him talk, for, like most old men, he found in the sound of his own words his greatest pleasure; and when he halted to let his mind wander back into his earlier days, I bluntly asked him why he had divorced my mother. He pulled at his white beard as if my question had annoyed him, but I repeated it, wondering, and not without pity,

how so frail a being could ever have summoned strength enough to be a power in the Senate.

"Boy," said he, still pulling at his beard, "you look somewhat like my son, your mother's son that died so long ago—but not so bright, boy; not so bright, not so considerate. He would not have asked such a question."

I stood looking at him, feeling now no pity for his age, his feebleness, for when weakness insults us we despise it. "He did not have a chance to ask such a question, and you don't know what he would have done, it was so long ago and he was so little when he died."

"Yes, long ago," he mused, gazing through the open door off toward one of the Seven Hills. "Years and years ago when they brought hay from Africa there were flower seeds in the straw, and strange flowers began to spring up where once but brownish grass had grown. One seed came not from Africa, but from the gods, and the flower bloomed, but soon it perished. Boy, you wonder that your mother does not love you more. She cannot when you remind her that you are just enough like her son to be different."

Chafing under the insults of his imbecile mind, I told him that his son was a weakling and that I had killed a boy older than myself; and he cackled and seemed to spit dust out of

his dry mouth. He leaned back and was silent and, turning about, I was sharpening on a stone a knife that the Egyptian had given to me, when mother returned. I heard her enter the room and then, as all was silent, I looked about to see what she was doing, and I saw her sitting on the stone floor with her hands clasped over the old man's knees, looking up into his dead face. I was glad that night when the Egyptian took him out, stealthily, to lay him in the street, for thus he was disposed of, for we were too poor to offer any rite over his body.

It was not long before my mother followed him into the unknown world. I knelt beside her during her last moments. She died with no emotion toward me; she was cold, and this was what in that day they called the virtue and the strength of a Roman matron. Now it was that I and Nebuces, the Egyptian, lived all alone. No, I had one other companion, the sword that had been made for me by Calo. I slept with it, hugging it up close when the wind blew hard. Nebuces thought that it was because I was afraid to sleep without a weapon. Wise as one of the sages of the Nile was this old man, but he did not know everything. If opportunity had fallen, I believe that he would have stolen the sword, to turn it into money for his own uses, but it

he had, I would have killed him with the curious knife that he had given me. He did not appear to grow older as the slow years passed. His leathery skin had long since received all of the marks that time could put upon it. He knew much about the stars, and could read strange things from flat stones that he kept in a box, but the Egyptians knew but ill the use of arms, and as he could not teach me the art of fighting, I cared naught for his wisdom. It seemed, though, that in the past his people had been great. It must have been that one of the queens was beautiful, for Antony loved her, he who shook the world with his tread. Nebuces said that he had seen her, this daughter of the warm Egyptian sun, and that her idlest kisses must have been as kingdoms and her love the universe of the gods. He said that he had seen Antony, and all that kept me from kissing his old eyes was the fear that he might be a liar. He loved life, little as it held for him, and I have often wondered why it is that men who love life most are those most inclined to falsehood.

In exchange for the mysterious things Nebuces read from the tablets of stone, I read to him the book of all books, written by the immortal Julius Caesar; and when came the passage that "men fear most the evils which are the furthest from them" the old man

rubbed his eyes and said: "It is because the greatest evil of all, death, is put furthest away in our minds; but we should not fear it, for death is as much of a gift as life. It has ever been held as the greatest evil, the extent of punishment for crime; but do we punish the thing that commits the crime? A man steals into a house with a knife in his hand and commits murder, and they put him to death; but the real something that impels the hand to strike the blow has not been touched. We may say that it is the mind, but after his body has moldered into dust there is as much mind in the world as ever. All fire comes from the sun, and, no matter how much fire you kindle or put out, the sun is not weakened. It must be, then, that there is one great mind and that part of it which strays off and commits crime is a vagrant fragment; and that when you kill the body you but send the mind back to the place where it originally belonged."

"Then you believe that a man lives more than once," said I, and he smiled and answered: "Man always has lived and always must live. He is an expression of something eternal."

"I don't believe it. Caesar knew that the gods were only the playthings of man. No wiser man ever lived than he."

Nebuces shook his head. "Caesar was a

strong reflection of the Eternal mind, and he dazzled the earth, but great as he was he may not have known all truth. He was right in not believing in the gods, for they are mere trinkets set up by man; but man needed them in order that he might develop the world. From the worship of the gods arose the arts, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. When Caesar came the gods had fulfilled their missions."

"But will there come other gods to take their places?"

"Perhaps not other gods. The Jews have a God, great and invisible."

"But if he is invisible, how do they know that they have him?"

"That which causes the tide is invisible, yet we know that there must be a cause."

"But we do not worship the cause of the tide.'

"We might, and with no shock to well-balanced intellect; but you are not metaphysical. You are of the sword, material. Some sleep with wisdom and dream of other worlds. You sleep with steel and dream of man's blood."

"But, Nebuces," said I, "how can you talk so and believe that there may be one great mind and another life and yet at the same time be so unworthy of trust? Why is it that you would lie and steal?"

He did not take this with offense. He smiled sadly and his old eyes gleamed. "We may feel a suggestion of the truth and yet live in error," he replied. "We may catch but a glimpse until there may come a time when with steady gaze we may contemplate the whole truth."

He was becoming too vague for me, passing not only beyond the limits of my reason but of my interest as well, seeking to be mystical, which has ever been a recourse of the weak, of those who fear to risk life for glory. Truth, which this old man pretended to see only in glimpses, was revealed unto me—simple, proved by the ages; and it was that man to be great must conquer man. My argument, Rome's argument, was this: "Of what use would be all wisdom if the strong should come and set a foot upon your neck?"

Thus I spoke to Nebuces and he waved his hand out toward the great city, the palaces and the temples of triumph, and said: "All as unreal as the shadow cast by the branch of a dead tree, in the mistiest moonlight. That which you may behold, looking out over Rome, is not the truth. Compared with the real, it is no more fixed, no more eternal than the ant hill. Eradmus, you believe in earthly honor and glory, and reproach me with the weakness of lying, and yet you lie."

Upon my couch lay my sword, and, springing to my feet, I seized it. "You old dog," I cried, "I will spread your black blood over the tablets that teach you such impudence."

He had been sitting on the box that contained his treasures; and now he arose like a great serpent throwing itself upward. In a voice that chilled me he commanded me to be quiet. I waited, with the sword gripped tight in my hand, but I could scarcely restrain myself, for he smiled upon me, seeming to feel that in some way he held me in his power. "Listen to me but for a moment," he said. "You called me a liar and I was not angry, for it was the truth; but when I tell a truth you arise against my life. You told me that the old man who died in this house was your uncle, returned from Greece; but he was of no relation to you, as you well knew, but the former husband of your mother, and a Senator who lived under penalty of death should he return to Rome. I, this old error"—and here he put his hand upon his breast—'this old error said nothing, but obeyed the orders that were given to him, though he knew that money waited for him if he should grovel his way up to the Senate with the truth in his mouth."

I threw my sword upon the couch, and the old man sat down on his box of treasures.

He indeed had me in his power—the power of truth. "Nebuces, my mother was the cause of that lie."

"Ah," he replied, "and something, some interest is the cause of every lie." For a long time he sat in silence and I stood there looking down upon him, wondering if I should be better off if he were out of the world. Suddenly it seemed to dawn that all of his arguments came out of his opposition to the course which I had chosen to adopt in life; and then I said to him: "If you don't want me to be a soldier, what is it you desire that I should be?"

His face brightened. "Be a man and come with me and look for the truth."

"But whither shall we go?"

"To Judea, where there is much wisdom."

"To drive camels and sell grain? To throw away the great heritage of a Roman and to become a worshiper of gold? There is glory in metal, Nebuces, but it is in polished steel. In that metal alone is all of the wisdom worth possessing on this earth."

He never sought to argue with me long at a time, and whenever our talk had reached a certain stage, it seemed to me that a sort of film came suddenly into his eyes, shutting off his further interest in the sight of me. Once, with my permission, he went away and was

gone a long time, and when I asked what he had been doing he answered that under a man possessed of great wisdom he had been seeking truth. While constantly with me he had not noticed my growth, but now he marveled at my stature, and when I told him of my feats of strength on the Campus Martius he smiled sadly, for he knew that my mind was still bent upon the army. Indeed, so far from having undergone any sort of change in this respect, I had offered myself to my country, and, within a few days, was to be admitted to the ranks as a common soldier. There had been a time, of course, when every Roman youth was a soldier, but now the army was becoming more of a special calling; and I rejoiced at this, for it stamped me as different from youths whom I knew, and who could not leap into the ranks to steal the fame of other men and then leap out to fatten and to thrive upon it. Upon coming home one night I brought the news that I had been sworn in, to recruit one of the legions serving in Gaul or Britain; and the old man shook his head. "Then you are to march as far as you can from truth," he said. "In those rude lands all is ignorance."

CHAPTER III

Old Limprosus

IT WAS scarcely dawn and the cocks were crowing when we marched out from sleeping Rome. Upon leaving the house, after the midnight hour, to go to the camp, I did not arouse the old Egyptian; and so I left him possessed of the hovel with its bare walls and its falling roof, through which the rain had begun to beat. Once I looked back to see the whitish rock ghastly in the light of the early summer's lagging moon, but no emotion came to hold me dearly to the spot. I had lived there with no other thought than to leave when manhood's prompting strength should come, the full heritage of the true soldier; and though the house was in Rome, the envied of the world, yet I looked upon it as the cracking shell that had held me in banishment from a life which surely I should love. When at the camp, in making ready to march, I gathered up the accouterments of my trade, the weight, eighty pounds, seemed as an addition to my own strength. How great it was to feel myself in this strong tide, a part of it, a tide that had overswept

the world! In the history of nations there had been mighty armies, but no such soldiers as these men, advanced beyond all precedent in the military art. Silently we marched until without the walls, and then as the sun threw the spokes of his firewheel from behind a hill, we broke forth with chanting and with merriment. But by the centurions this was soon hushed, for no distance from any possible enemy warranted a moment's relaxation from strictest discipline. Every man had the same privilege, the privilege to die for honor, and surely this was worth all of the dreariness of the dull school and the muscle strain that was to temper one to the hardships of the march and the toil of building roads over dangerous precipices. Regulation demanded that with this weight of eighty pounds each soldier was to march twenty miles, which, day in and day out, will soon eat up the distance of a long road; but, of course, there were times when an army was expected to throw away all encumbrances and to sweep across the country like a storm.

Our first camp was in the hills, among olive groves, and even here, though in Italy, the night's resting place was fortified. I shall never forget my sensations as I stood upon a knoll, looking out over the purple country. During my life I had made but few excursions

beyond the walls of the city. The Roman youth loved the streets better than nature, but now all the world seemed as a part of me, of the conquest of my sword, and I reveled in flattered contemplation of it. Our small army, not a full legion in numbers, was not all of new recruits, but many old and tried soldiers were placed judiciously among us to give order and strength. Companionships were formed early, within an hour or two, and the man whom I most admired was old Limprosus, who had rejoined the ranks after having served his allotted time. He came to me as I was standing on the knoll, and, smiling through his close and grizzled beard, he said:

"Youth, you remind me of myself when first I marched from Rome; but those were the days of glory."

"Is none of the glory left for me?" I inquired.

"Pickings, perhaps—after the feast.'

"But the feast of Rome is eternal," I replied, and this seemed to please him. "But tell me, how are we to get into the country of Britain?"

"We will march into Gaul and then in ships will be sent across the choppiest of seas."

"You have been there?"

"My sword has sipped the thin blood of a Druid."

"A Druid? What is that?"

"A priest of great power among those ignorant people."

"But I didn't know that Rome interfered with the religion of the conquered."

"Not so long as the religion is harmless, but the Druids offer up human sacrifice, and this, except in games wherein the whole people take interest and amusement, is contrary to all moral law; but when you have traveled about as much as I have, my son, you will find that the world is still full of superstition. Rome carries the torch, but sometimes the wind blows it out. But the Druids! Though their blood be thin, they are furious beasts, and can excite their people to rush upon the sword—men and women alike.

"Ah, but the maidens of Britain! Their blood is not thin, and of their gore my sword has not taken a distasteful sip, but has been gorged upon it. I see you feel that you would not care to kill a woman; and neither should I, if she were not a fiend. Some of those British maidens, as beautiful as they appear, as soft of skin and as golden of hair, are very devils when their war chant has made the oak leaves tremble. Sometimes they are affectionate, with a tenderness, a sort of loving weakness, almost unknown to other peoples. One was, that I remember. She followed me

to the camp, carrying my buckler, my saw and mattock. She swore that she would not go back to her people. She cooked for me, and washed my clothes, but when she heard the war chant of her people she seized my sword and strove with all her might to kill me, and her might was not small. I knocked her down and put my foot on her beautiful neck. She swore that she would behave herself; but when I let her up, out among the trees the chant arose again, and once more she made at me and I was forced to—see that flight of birds off to the south. It looks like a part of the dusk, wheeling away to join the dawn, somewhere."

"Yes, but the British maid? You say you were finally forced to——"

"Oh, yes, I killed her, and for a day or two on the march life seemed heavier."

"With regret?"

"With the weight of my mattock and buckler." He laughed grimly, this piece of seasoned war timber. There on the knoll, in the deepening of the night, we continued to stand, I in my freshness and he, lingering as if the place held associations for him, coming back out of the past. In this surmise I was not wrong, as presently I shall show. I asked how it was that he, so valiant a soldier and with so much of useful experience, had not been

advanced to a position of envied preferment, and though in the deepened dusk I could not mark the strong features of his rugged face, yet I felt that he was smiling grimly.

"Hah," he said, "on account of a tenderness that a soldier should not feel. Had I reënlisted immediately after I was free to leave the army, I could have gone back as a centurion, but an interval fell between my putting aside the sword and the act of taking it up again. There was a threat of civil disturbance. My command had been withdrawn from abroad and was camped in Italy. In a small villa not far away lived a maid, with the neck of a swan and with eyes that seemed as robberies from the sky at night when the stars are brightest. I first saw her as she walked in a grove, in the cool of an evening, and I heard her at the same moment, for she screamed and turned to fly from a mad dog that had leaped over a wall and was rushing upon her. It took but a moment for me to leap between her and the beast, and with a downward sweep of my sword I cut his legs from under him, and it made me laugh to see him fall, standing for a moment upon his bleeding stubs, so sharp was my blade and so swift the stroke. With another blow I cut off his head, and then, with the bantering impudence of a soldier, I took it by the ears and made pretense of

presenting it to her as a trophy of the chase. That was the beginning. I have now to tell of the end.

"As a soldier I could not marry her, but my time in the army was drawing to a close. In mind I saw a colony in Gaul, a growing town where refinements were springing up like flowers. Here we could settle, and with the advantages that come to one who has well served his country, I could attain to a position of some importance. The picture pleased her and the day for the ceremonial of our marriage was appointed. I bade my companions farewell, and quit the army. I went to her home and was not only received as a welcome guest, but as a near relation. But while I was there, waiting for the preparations attendant upon the coming feast, there came from the city a frail fop, the son of a wine merchant. He halted to find shelter from a storm of rain. His jewels dazzled her and her beauty stirred his feeble and degenerate heart. When the storm was past he did not go, but remained the night. On the morrow he lingered, and it was then that she dismissed me, telling me that her heart could never be mine. Foolish romances were not countenanced in Italy, and I turned to her father, expecting that he would command her; but the thought of the wine merchant's wealth had dazzled him, too,

and he bade me go. I went away, and on a hill I looked back at the place where I had so fondly hoped that my happiness was to be found. The villa is over yonder, youth, and this is the hill on which I stood."

I made some sort of careless reply. Of what interest was it to me, this foolish love for a maid, even though her neck were swan-like and her eyes robberies from the starry heavens? There was only one true love, the love for the sword; but I did not say so to Limprosus. Though still a powerful man, he was growing old, and I could see that to find recompense for his lost youth he was reading much, for it is in this way that the aged are enabled to flatter themselves with a fancied superiority over the lusty, the more fortunate ones of earth.

The trumpet called us to our tents. On the ground we lay, side by side, Limprosus and I, and no word passed when the lights were out.

The morning broke like a scattering of rose leaves. Early were we on the march, and though my training had been hard, to set my muscles against fatigue, and though the day before my eighty pounds, as evening came, had grown but little more in weight, yet now a soreness came with the dawn. Limprosus noticed it and pleasantly remarked that the army found muscles that mere exercise could

never reach. At the close of this day's march I did not stand about to view the country, but was glad enough to drop down and to sleep. On the morning that followed I was not quite so sore, though stiff, but I was not sorry when night came along the road to meet us. After this, however, I was blithe and light beneath my load. Now my longing was to kill something, to red-temper my sword, this maiden steel, envied of all. I asked Limprosus if we were likely soon to have a fight in Britain, and he said not if we were stationed near the coast. Here young Sempre spoke up, putting in phrase my own half-formed thought.

"But why is it the wish of Rome to send us so far to make mere citizens of us? Are not men in arms against us in the east? Are all of the Parthians conquered?"

The grim old soldier shook his head as stoutly he marched along.

"It is too early yet to rail against a quiet time. Among those barbarians we never know what is to chance, and before long blood may be as plentiful as wine at an Athenian feast. The British are not so well trained, have more of individual initiative and therefore are fiercer than the Gauls. The time is growing apace since Julius Caesar landed and dyed the waves with blood, but,

unlike Gaul, the country is almost as wild as if civilization had never set foot on its shores."

"But we desire to fight soldiers and not savages," said Sempre. "Is it anything to go into a slaughter pen and kill a steer?"

"Yes, if a steer should have brass horns and know how to use them. Wait until you see coming toward you, furious as the winds, a chariot, with flashing scythes on each side to mow men like grass. I warrant that you will feel disposed to step out of the way. Since the withdrawal of Caesar there have been no determined attempts to conquer the island. Incursions have been made, but no army deserving of the name has penetrated the interior. In fact, a small garrison is maintained there for a moral purpose, to keep the Gauls from rising; for, seeing that the Britons had been left unconquered, they themselves would revolt and make a desperate strike for liberty."

Any one who had ever faced steel was of great and admiring interest to us, the young legionaries. No distillation of the gods could have seemed more precious to us than the blood of an enemy. Limprosus told of a comrade who in Britain had been torn to pieces by a great cave bear, but we looked not forward to adventure among animals. We did

not care to figure as the heroes of a fable; to be imaged upon painted cloth; but to live in bronze and in marble statues, such as they say spouted blood on the wild night before great Julius fell.

And that night I dreamed that the hour of glory had come, that about me lay heaped up breast high, a circle of headless enemies; and when I awoke I was sitting up, with my sword pressed to my lips.

CHAPTER IV

A Sky of Rainbows

THE march offered no interest until we entered the provinces of a new country, where the civilizing forces of Rome were quietly weaving the mantles of a higher and a finer state. I did not know much of country life, but it was a surprise to see how far agriculture had been brought forward in Gaul. The wheat fields were already a shame to those in Italy, and hillsides which had run red with the blood of the men who rallied round Vercingetorix, were now green with the vine. Villas were springing up where lately the country had been wild, and in the towns through which we passed there was industry and apparent contentment.

One night we camped near the site of a town that had promised well, but not long before, within a few months, a body of mounted Franks, like a pack of howling wolves, had swept down upon it, murdered the small Roman garrison and put the defenseless people to the sword. How deeply

Sempre and I lamented that the wretches had not deferred their visit until after our arrival, that we might have sport with them! Again old Limprosus shook his head.

"Together with all of the youngsters of Rome, you boys imagine that nature has endowed the Roman with the prowess to overcome all men, one against five. There was a time when this was more or less true, but it is becoming harder and harder as the barbarians learn from us. The British are fierce, but the Franks are even worse, and with it all a wonderful skill in horsemanship; and a legion of them, circling round and round, can make it uncomfortable for a cohort of Roman veterans."

At this we smiled, as all young soldiers smile at the supposed feebleness of their enemy. Our spirits fell as the country through which we were passing became more civilized and better protected, for we knew that we were marching away from possible opportunity to satisfy the thirst of our youthful swords. In some of the towns we were entertained with music. Fair maidens came forth to welcome us and to scatter flowers before us, and so lovingly did they smile upon us that I thought them the most gentle of creatures, but Limprosus said that in their hearts they hated us and would like to see us all

with our throats cut. Though we had set out from Rome with nearly a complete legion, yet at more than one town we left a cohort to strengthen the garrison, so, when we came to the sea that separated us from Britain, we were short at least five cohorts, more than half of our original number. But this made no difference to Sempre or to me, for the fewer the numbers the greater the glory.

Looking out over the boisterous water, I pictured the crossing of Caesar's army, for it was here that his ships had danced upon the waves. So strong a gale was blowing that it was not until the following day that we followed the gleaming eagles on board the vessels; and now for the first time in my life I had a taste of sickness, for the motion of the ship brought on a deathly nausea. Signals had been given that all was well, and immediately upon landing we marched over the low and sandy beach to the hill whereon a mere handful of Romans held a fortified camp. It was inky dark when we landed, and the rain was falling hard and the air was raw and penetrating. The remnant of Rome welcomed us. Mingling with the soldiers, we found that they expressed themselves freely concerning the condition of the country and the futility of keeping men stationed there, since it did not seem to be the intention to

make a complete conquest of the island. They said that the climate for the most part was abominable, which we were ready to believe.

Nowhere was there a star. Out in the black of the night the hungry wolves were howling, and a soldier named Crapius told me this story: A number of sheep had been sent over from Gaul to afford the men a holiday feast, and as their rations had been short they were much pleased with the prospect, but, on the night before the sheep were to be slaughtered, the wolves broke into the pen and carried them off, and now, every night, they came to howl their impatience at the long delay in furnishing them with another sheep festival.

From what I overheard of the talk among the officers, there was not going to be an early attempt to colonize and to civilize Britain, after the manner adopted in Gaul, but as some sort of demonstration must be made, the strength of the soldiers was to be expended in the building of roads, such being a property not likely to be destroyed by the barbarians.

The morning broke dull and heavy, and though it was now slightly past the midsummer, yet the air was still raw. What struck me most was the vivid greenness of the land.

Nowhere in Italy could leaves be so bright or grass so soft and velvety. I shall never forget the glorious pictures in the upper air when the clouds broke. It was a sky made of rainbows. Great mist forms, like dragons, floated low over the land, purple and bright yellow. Far away a hilltop would seem to be aflame, and then darkness would suddenly fall as if a mantle had been thrown upon it. Here and there gleamed small bodies of water, like mirrors set in the earth. Though the air was raw, it brought with it an astonishing vigor, and the men who had been stationed there long wore roses, not upon their garments, but in their cheeks. The natives near the camp were friendly, and we walked about among them, in the little mud-built town at the foot of the hill where gushed forth a great spring of delicious water. To gaze upon the forests of oak was a never-tiring pleasure to me, and how delicious the music when I stood among the trees with the rain pattering about me!

In the village there was an old man who had fought against Caesar. His life had been spared and since then he had lived near the Romans. He could speak enough Latin to impress me with the belief that not always did he utter the truth. We asked him, or I did—when Sempre and I were in his house, where he kept for sale a lot of trinkets and a bitter

liquor—if he had read Caesar's book. He answered that he had seen him write a part of it.

He said that during a fight, when Caesar had dispatched a great British chieftain, an idea for his book suddenly came to him, and tucking his sword under one arm he took out his tablets and began to write while the battle was fierce about him. His men were greatly outnumbered and gradually retired, leaving Caesar busy with his writing. One of his men ran back to apprise him of his danger, but he did not look up until he had finished what he had thought to put down, and then he grasped his sword and, as was his custom, turned the tide of battle.

This old man professed a lively interest in the beauty of my sword, was never weary of holding it in his hand; and this caused me to think well of him until I discovered that his admiration was centered about the gold laid in the hilt. He was so old that his teeth were all of them gone, and it is a wonder he had not told us that they had been knocked out by Caesar himself, he was so fond of associating himself with the world's master. He could eat no solid food and lived upon the product of a goat that looked almost as ancient as himself. This animal he milked in a sort of earthen pan, and he would frequently

halt to drink before the process was complete. Sometimes when we saw the goat coming down the hill we would call out that here came the old man's dinner. At his house one day I drank so freely of his brown liquor that on my way back to the stockade I fell down. A centurion saw me, and the next day I was forced to carry a log about the camp as a punishment.

On nearly every day it rained. There was nothing to be done, no amusement of any sort, and life began to pall upon me. Limprosus strove to interest me in his books, of which he had many, having picked them up whenever he could; but scholarship was too tame to fit in with my notion. From a slave he had learned to read the great dramas in Greek, and often he translated them to us. In the fighting there was some little interest, but that which he most loved, the poetry, was wearisome to me. Homer was all war, and I thought that I should like this, but I soon found that there was no thrill in the bravery of a man who knew that at the moment he was wounded unto death a god would come down and fly away with him. A book which I think he thought most of was Plato. To please him I would listen, but to me nothing could have been more devoid of truth or interest. It was all an argument on nothing and leading to no

end. It was the aim of Socrates, the hero, to get some one cornered in an argument, to make him acknowledge that a certain thing was true and then prove to him that it was not, and then go still further and show that it was. It seemed that this Socrates possessed a wife who had a wasp tail for a tongue, and this tickled Limprosus, for from this he appeared to find congratulation that he had not married, believing, as all of the Greek philosophers seemed to do, that, when opportunity offered, all women were one and the same. For Latin literature this old soldier had a contempt. He said that Cicero could make a speech and that Caesar could write a book, but aside from these two there was nothing in Latin worth reading. Sempre took issue with him. They would argue by the hour.

"If Rome has no thought," said the young man, "how is it that Rome has conquered the world, since thought is the father of action?"

But this did not shake the faith that Limprosus had in his theory. "A tiger has most graceful action, but no one can say that it has graceful thought," he replied. "Rome rules the world, but she never saw the day when she was so great as Athens under Pericles. The material influence of Rome may be swept away, but the ideas born in Athens will always abound. Power reaches its height and de-

clines. It weakens when shared by the many, but thought is strengthened by diffusion, and a multitude that thinks is stronger than one man—than the one man that gave birth to the thought."

"But," insisted Sempre, "of what good is thought unless it establishes material power? An emperor on his throne may civilize the world, but how impotent is a philosopher in a cell!"

"Ha, Sempre, you forget that civilization is but the materializing of a thought. Behind the material there must be the metaphysical."

"And I suppose," said Sempre, "that with a little more reading of those Greek weaklings you will be ready to believe with Socrates that there is somewhere another life and perhaps an invisible god."

"Why shouldn't I? May it not be true?"

Sempre scowled and thus replied: "If I thought so I would break my sword, get me a goat and live like the old Briton in the mud village."

"But that would not bring you in closer relation with the future life. This God that Socrates believed exists did not tell him that he must live on the milk of a goat. I do not say that I believe with Socrates. I simply agree that possibly he may have been right. He was wise."

"But what has proved that he was a wise man?"

"Time."

"Time—age; then second childhood must be the earth's ripest wisdom."

"Sempre," said Limprosus, "one would think that you had studied with the Sophists, you are so quick to turn with a grain of sand the current of an argument. When I said that time had proved this man great, I meant that what he said had withstood the ravages and the cankers of time and must therefore be woven of enduring substance. You speak of Rome's greatness, and in material power it is great, but let me say something that I wish you to think over: When one nation conquers another nation and adopts the literature and the refinements of the conquered, then in time will the conquered prove greater than the conqueror."

In this there might have been enough of food-thought for the youth's mind to nibble upon, but without considering for a moment, he replied: "As men grow old they sympathize with the conquered, believing that they themselves are about to be conquered by Nature. It is the affinity that lives between two weaknesses. It so chanced that my father was a scholar and that I was brought up in the almost stagnant atmosphere of the library.

Therefore I am more than to an ordinary extent acquainted with the tricks of the learned. One of these tricks was to pretend a great wisdom among the old Greeks, but my father did not think so until he began to grow old."

Limprosus did not show temper at this slur at his age, except to say that as for himself he was still in the vigor of his manhood, which was more than attested by his endurance upon the march. "But," said he, "does any man really begin to think until time has led him somewhat along the pathway of life? A young man's thoughts lie in his blood, which is hot, and therefore blind with brutish lust, but an older man's meditations, which must ever be cool and considerate, are in his brain, out of the reach of his hotter blood."

Sempre walked up and down the hard earthen floor of our quarters. How splendid he was in the full flower of his youth, with his black hair in many a ringlet curling about his graceful head! I could imagine him firing an army with an appeal to the immortal glory of his country. He was one of those whom, on many a field of battle, out of sudden love and admiration, men have elected to wear a crown. Suddenly he turned and pointing to Limprosus said, in a sad and warning voice: "Comrade, it is such as you, stimulator of discussion,

that finally disrupts armies, and sets them, antagonistic bits, one fragment against another. The Roman soldier is permitted to think as he may elect, so long as he is obedient to the outward forms of discipline. It was not so under the old Republic. The army was then all of one mind, one belief—in the gods; but as adherents to an emperor, we usurp, each one of us, some of the unwritten privileges of the purple, and make license of our individuality. There was a time, too, when none save Romans were eligible to serve in the army, but now money purchases exemption for the rich and mottles our ranks with barbarians that have sworn fealty. Thus has come an antagonism of ideas, which men, sworn as they may have been, cannot help showing when sudden emergency arises."

We clapped our hands in applause of this speech, and so did good-natured Limprosus, but he was not as yet willing to give over, for, drawing a new breath of controversy, he thus replied: "But if it is the expression of thought that is to destroy the Roman army, then you must acknowledge that thought is at last more powerful than the sword. Therefore, as one of the great fathers of thought, Socrates was more potent than an emperor."

It was not in human nature that these discussions could come to a satisfactory conclu-

sion, and bearing with them until interest lagged, we usually drowned them with a song. On the present occasion a song had burst forth, at the last remark of Limprosus, when there came orders for a quick march into the country. This was received with a shout of genuine delight, but we were ordered to keep quiet, which we of course were willing to do, enjoying silently the prospect of some sort of sport, a brightening of our rust. Two cohorts of us were the favored ones. As we marched forth through the gate our brothers not included in the expedition looked with envy upon us. The inhabitants of the village came out of their huts to gaze at us as we passed, and I noticed that a guard had been thrown about the place to keep any of them from stealing away from the town. It was shortly after the noon hour when we took up our march, and pushing swiftly forward till night-fall, we hastily fortified a camp on the top of a hill. It was not until then that we had the opportunity to inquire one of another as to what was meant by this sudden move, but enlightenment soon came, for there was no disposition to keep us in the dark, Rome believing that the more intelligent the men the better the service rendered.

News had come that not far off in the country the Druids had arranged for a great sacri-

fice of human beings, to commemorate a noted day in their calendar, and our orders were to smite and to take no prisoners. We were piloted by a tall Briton, clad in skins. Limprosus, who understood a few words of his rude tongue, was so favored by chance as to talk to him, and freely he professed himself to stand in disgust of the murderous ceremony which the Romans had forbidden. His own father had been offered up, with religious zeal to all appearances, but in secret revenge, having brought upon himself the displeasure of a priest. The sacred grove, where upon great stone slabs the blood of the victims was to be shed, was not more than two hours' march from the camp on the hill, and the slaughter was to begin with the rising of the sun. Humorous Sempre vouched it as his opinion that if the victims lived until the rising of a British sun they might all of them die of old age.

Sleep fell upon me like the breath of a bloom. The boy strives to hurry himself into slumber, that the holiday shall perforce more quickly come. With stubborn will I dulled my senses, lying listless till I slept, and how jocund was the summons that called me from sweet nothing to blithesome consciousness! There was a thrill in every sound of preparation; the subdued ring of steel against steel; and in the hush of it all there was stealthy

charm, as silently we moved away like parts of the blackened night fleeing from the coming of the dawn.

Limprosus was at the very head, the right pivot of the advance column, and I marched beside him. Between Sempre and me strode the shaggy Briton. He had been so placed by Malos, the centurion, who had said to Sempre and to me, "If he prove treacherous, strike him down." Over the hills and across a noiseless stream we passed, and thence into a narrow valley, the end of which, the Briton said, would bring us to the sacred grove. For a wonder the air began to grow clear, and the heavy fog, that seemed to have followed us from the river, floated away. Soon we saw the flush of the coming sun. With quicker stride we hastened on, keying ourselves to shed the first blood of the sacrifice. Suddenly from the hills on each side there came a wild shout and down upon us rushed a horde of savages; but in our ranks there was no confusion. Out rang the quick words of command, and there we were, bristled like a porcupine. There was but one little flurry. It was when the Briton strove to break away. I, who was nearest him, needed no other authority than former warning and my own impulse. He died with his heaving bowels pressed against the hilt of my sword.

"First blood for you," said Sempre, as I pulled my purpled steel away. Then all was silent save for the war chant ringing now almost within our very ears. The hillsides were of gentle slope, and the great stones which the Britons had tried to roll down upon us, gathered no speed, but halted harmless. It was a stirring sight to see them coming, those wild things, like great animals half flayed of their hides, their skin coats flapping with the violence of their lunges from side to side. A flight of arrows darkened the air and struck fire from our steel, where steel was met; and, caught dull upon our bucklers, sounded like a hundred war drums fiercely beaten. And there we stood, with naught to do but to wait and to receive, for the breaking of our solid phalanx meant annihilation. From what I could judge, they outnumbered us more than twenty to one. Seeing that our stand was firm, their onward rush was slackened. Off into maneuverings broke bodies of their spearmen; but furiously onward came a chariot with flashing scythes. In it was a woman, bare of breast and with streaming hair. Broken from all management, her horses seemed to be running away, snorting as they came, and it was glorious to see that no man flinched when, rearing, they plunged into the line. Men fell, knocked down, cut

down by the scythes. But instantly the outward gap was closed, and a moment later the horses were killed.

I saw one rearing high with blood streaming from his throat, and then I saw the woman, swinging her sword aloft, mighty figure of defiance, and then she fell. Now from all sides they closed in upon us, quavering the air with their cries.

At me sprang a monster, hairy and red. I remember noting his great spreading nostrils as he panted. He missed me with his spear and drove it through a neighbor's shield. On he rushed with a sword nearly as broad as a saw. I caught his blow and my sword cut into his and together they stuck. And then came the virtue of my training. I dropped upon one knee, wrenched my blade free, and, coming up, buried it in the lower part of his body. He seized it with both hands with monstrous strength, though the agony of death was spread upon his countenance, and pulling it through his hands I toppled him over and cut his head off almost at a blow.

The fight, not continuous on the part of the enemy, was conducted in a series of rushes, to be repulsed, and then to come on again at the revival of courage or of fury inspired by the Druids. The sun was high and we were panting with thirst. Our wounded were suffering

frightfully, penned up where but little aid could be given them. We dreaded the coming of the night, for we knew not what means those wretches might employ for our destruction. At last our general planned a charge, seeing that the attitude of mere defense, no matter how effective to repel, could never extricate us from our desperate position. Waiting until a large body had assembled on the slope, ready to sweep down upon us with a number of newly arrived chariots, we rushed forward in all the remaining force of our vigor. Thinking that at last they had us penned and that we would not dare to break from our position, they were at first thrown into confusion, but they rallied. For a time they fought hard, trying to mow us with the scythe chariots, and some of our men were cut down; but soon their horses were all dispatched and then began a chase and a slaughter. Our men became furious, and some of them, in their eagerness to exterminate, followed so far as never to return.

I was bounding along beyond the boundary of judgment, straining to wreak vengeance upon a priest, when out of a coppice rushed two lusty warmen, fantastic as gods from a barbaric temple. One of them was armed with a great tin sword, as thick as a man's hand, a most savage and formidable weapon

in the hands of the powerful. The other had a light spear. He threw it, and upon my buckler I caught it. The staff shivered. He wheeled to run, but I pinned him between the shoulders with my javelin, and so he was done for; but the one with the sword made fiercely at me and we were hot at it when the priest turned about to aid him. Just then I heard a shout of encouragement behind me. Though busy I saw the priest fly, but not for a long distance. With fleet legs he was soon overtaken and cut down; and when from my sword I was wiping the blood of the tin-armed monster, Sempre came walking back toward me, for it was his voice that I had heard and he it was who had slain the priest.

"If those religious devils were as good at fighting as at running they might achieve something," said he, smiling at the work I had done. "But perhaps each one of them may be a philosopher such as Limprosus delights to prate about. The trumpet calls. Let us hasten."

As we strode back to the place where the golden eagles were gleaming in the sun, Sempre added: "But the old soldier was right when he spoke of the fury of those devils. At one time it looked bad for us. Ah, my young comrade, how gallantly you have acquitted yourself!"

"And you, Sempre?"

"Oh, I am a Roman; but did you observe old Limprosus? He went about it as methodically as if he were harvesting wheat."

Drawing near the standards, we came upon Limprosus, walking leisurely beneath a tree, reading a book, a small thing that he could roll easily and carry with him.

"Limprosus," said Sempre, "I shall no more make sport of your learning."

He took his eyes off the text, smiled and replied: "How can you, when you cannot hide that you are a man of education?"

"But it does not follow that a man of education is a man of books. In the course of his enforced training a man may learn that which he despises, and though the poets may have taught us something of the softer and sometimes of the more heroic sides of life, yet I can never help associating the ink horn with the man of stealth and concealments."

They would here have entered into one of their interminable discussions, had I not reminded them of their duty. I was eager to learn of our losses in killed and wounded, but Limprosus did not concern himself, it being a matter that lay beyond his province or his care. But when he found that he was of the detail to bury the dead, he took up his mattock and did his work with his accustomed

and unconscious thoroughness. We had suffered the loss of seventy-eight killed and more than a hundred and fifty wounded. The enemy's loss was not counted. It must have been great. Their wounded were dispatched, and we left them all where they had fallen.

CHAPTER V

On the Homeward March

AS WE had to convey our wounded on litters, our return was much slower and of course with far less of enthusiasm than our advance had been. Now there was nothing to look forward to except to tell dull and seasoned ears of a mere skirmish with barbarians. It was, however, more than probable that we might be attacked on our way to the camp, and, to acknowledge truth, I did not tingle with my former delight when I thought of it. I was disappointed, too, to find that the general had taken no notice of my valor. At the close of the fight I had already imagined myself out in front of the command, receiving words of praise, but soon I found that I was almost an unnumbered part of a machine. I no longer wondered why Limprosus had not been promoted to high command, since it was thought that every man should be invincible, to be willing at all times to die. Ah, it was of more renown to have a Caesar snatch your idle sword and to turn a battle with it than for you yourself to

lead a mighty charge; but what ears in Rome were athirst to drink my praise? Stranger than all was it that Limprosus had spoken not a word in commendation of my skill. Sempre was the only one that had noted it.

When we had made strong our camp that evening, Limprosus took out his book to read during the long twilight. I felt that I should like to knock the book out of his hand and to tear it to tatters. I asked him what it was, and from his answer I gathered that it was something about frogs, written by one Aristophanes. I replied that surely he had chosen a great subject, and the old veteran answered that all of his subjects were great, since he wrote of the foibles of man.

"But," said I, "did he know how to kill a man nearly twice as big as himself?"

"With his pen he almost killed society, and that was something worth," he answered.

"Limprosus, did you know that I killed a giant to-day?"

"Yes, I saw you; a little crude, but withal a fair piece of work. You might have saved a man."

"Saved a man! How?"

"When the giant threw his spear, instead of avoiding it wholly, you might have caught it with a downward slant of your buckler and turned it into the ground."

"I didn't think of that."

"No, but you must think. And again, you followed too far when the chase began. But for a lucky chance you might have perished. Let me tell you that in arms steadiness will always count for more, and will better serve your country than eagerness and fury. But a young sword is hungry and will sometimes eat to disorder. You will know better the next time."

He again turned to his book, though the brown of night was settling. But I would not have him read. "Tell me," said I, "that I did well."

"You did, Eradmus. Old Calo, that made your sword, would have been proud of its metal."

"Calo, did you know him?"

"We served together in Africa, and it was afterward, in the mountains, in winter quarters that he experimented with steel and discovered the temper that made your father rich. But little good it did him."

"And little good it did my father," I answered. "It built him up a great trouble and finally ended his life."

"That is true. But suppose that instead of bringing to him the process of tempering swords, Calo had brought the secret of a library out of which he could have taken books. Wouldn't his life——"

Here Sempre broke in: "His life, whosoever it was, the Fates decreed, and it could not have been different even had the sun reversed his course and come up out of the west."

"Sempre," said I, not wishing to enter into a discussion with him nor to listen to one between him and Limprosus, "let me here offer to you my tardy gratitude. You saved my life. While in hot engagement with the painted wretch the priest would have stabbed me but for you."

"Ho," he laughed, "your tardy gratitude! Why, my swift running was but the action of my legs expressing their thanks to you, for more than once in the close of the fight you saved me."

"Is that true? I didn't know it."

Limprosus, rolling up his book to put it away, laughed and said to me: "Didn't I tell you that you were blind?"

"But not wholly," Sempre spoke, "for in the midst of the fight it took an observation less shrewd than mine own to see his eye light up at sight of that mad but beautiful creature, standing high in her chariot. And Limprosus, if I mistake not, it was your dart that brought her down."

"Mine among others," answered the old warrior. "She offered a thrilling mark."

Sempre laughed. "I did not aspire to such luxury as to smite her bosom. With becoming modesty I killed her horse. The gods reserve some of their favors for the frosty of head, Limprosus. They permitted you to caress her where her wild heart beat. But tell me, how would you like to forswear Rome, marry such a maid and live in a palace of logs, plastered with mud, and to be king of as much territory as you could behold, looking up and down a sluggish stream? Imagine her kindling a fire with your books to roast your mutton. And if more frost should fall upon your head and cause you to weary of her love, she would cut off your ears as you slept."

"Your picture is too tame to offer inducement," said Limprosus. "But even should she cut off my ears, to prove that she had not lost interest in me, still she would be better than many a Roman maid, who thinks herself a virgin so long as she has not cut out a heart."

"Ha, one would think that you had been in close quarters there."

"I have looked upon a woman's treachery." He arose and walked away, and I said to Sempre: "You have the faculty of touching him where he is most tender." Then briefly I told the story of the maid who had turned from Limprosus to marry the son of the wine

merchant. Sempre asked several questions as to the exact location of the villa wherein the woman lived and then he laughed with bitterness in his tones. "You must have known her," said I. It was some time before he spoke, sitting almost invisible in the dark. I fancied that his face grew blacker than the night as these words came from him:

"I am the son of the wine merchant, and the bridegroom was my brother. But he was not a degenerate, though of a delicate constitution, and of such a nature, gentle and refined, as would twine loving tendrils about a stronger heart. I loved him close-gripped; to me he was as brother and as sister, sweet-tempered and soft of voice. He met her and his soul was inflamed and he brought her home. In our household she was as a princess, but she proved a wanton, breaking his heart, and stealing forth my sword he fell upon it and ended his wretched life."

"What became of her?" I inquired.

"She drives a chariot in a circus. Tiberius has smiled upon her. And so it was she that seared this old Roman soldier's heart, drove him to beat the dust out of worm-eaten books; but I cannot pity him. The boy knew no better. The man ought to have been stronger."

After a time the lights were put out. We

stretched ourselves beside the old soldier, and I lay a long time before I slept, listening to the distant howling of the wolves and the hooting of owls that seemed to perch upon our standards.

The morning broke with rain. The tender, sapful grass broke off and clung to our feet as we strode along. Nowhere was there a road leading toward the camp. From the hills we descended into marsh-lands where we floundered about in danger of being submerged in the bog. Several of the wounded died under this hardship and we buried them, sometimes in more water than in earth. We had departed from the camp with a guide, and of the course but little note could have been taken. The country was such a continuation of hill and bog that it was not strange that we should come again upon our own tracks, made but a few hours before. News of the disaster to the British had spread fast, and sometimes we came to smoking villages, with meat roasting, as if sudden fright had seized the inhabitants. We did not, however, come upon a native until late in the afternoon of the third day from the battlefield. Then it was that an old man with long white beard stood out in front of us, making signs of submission. He fell prostrate as we approached. When he had ceased his doleful lamentations,

Limprosus was told to speak to him and to find out from him what he meant by his visit to us.

Limprosus spoke to him and he replied that what he wanted was peace; that his people did not want war; that the Romans were the avenging children of the gods. This was well enough, but it meant nothing except to build up another fabric of treachery. Our commander inquired if he knew the way to our camp, and he answered that he did and that he would be pleased to conduct us thither if we would permit him to live in the village along with his old brother and the goat. So he was put in the van, with a chain about his neck. He said that there was no need of camping for the night, that we were near enough to the village to reach it within a few hours, but, not trusting him, we spent another black night on a hilltop. But he had spoken the truth, for early on the following morning we saw the gleam of our standards and soon we passed into the stockade.

The old man was not permitted to enter, as it might have been his aim to spy upon the strength or weakness of the fortification. But again we found evidences of his sincerity, for when his brother, the white-bearded sage of the village, saw him he ran forward and embraced him.

The commander of the expedition delivered his report and that was the end of it, with no good accomplished except the killing of a thousand or more of the British. If there was to be no immediate conquest of the island, what availed the mere spasmodic shedding of blood? But stay, it had availed something; it had stained with rich color the lip of a maiden sword.

With all of its discipline there was much of reveling in a Roman camp, and while the cup was passing the youngsters who had not accompanied the expedition pressed us to tell of the fight, but the veterans, like old dogs, looked with contempt upon this, the play of puppies, though when Limprosus spoke they listened to him. I shall not forget the gratitude that warmed my heart toward him when he declared that it had been a combat of spirit and of exceeding danger.

"Eradmus," spoke up a comrade who had been forced to stay at home, "I thought that you would bring back a red head on your spear."

"He could have brought several," Limprosus answered, and at that moment I loved him more than I had ever loved any one except old Calo.

CHAPTER VI

Limprosus Tells of the Young Jew

NOW was there a return of the desperate dreariness of camp life, with no prospect of activity, with no news from Rome, and with winter slowly coming on apace through the chill autumn drizzle. Our fortress overlooked the snarly sea, but often for more than a week at a time the fog veils were so thick that we could not discern a ship though it might pass within hailing distance of the shore. Week after week, and there was but a single incident to mark one day from another here on this the outer rim of the world, and that was but poverty in its lack of interest, the death of the old man who lived at the udder of the goat. One morning they found him lying dead in his straw. The villagers set up a doleful wailing. They buried him near the town. Following the corse, the goat turned aside and browsed upon the shrubs until after the interment and then afforded supper for the remaining brother, the one who had served as our guide across the bogs and through the wilderness.

One day shortly after the death of the old man our quarters took fire. Gladly would we have seen them burn, not that we despised the habitation, but that we longed for episode. We were not, however, permitted the luxury of a conflagration. Obeying orders, we sullenly subdued the flames.

Winter came, the coldest remembered by our old guide. In many places great drifts of snow almost shut out the view of the dreary forest. One morning, while a detail of us were out after wood, two deer started up from the snow. It was so deep as to whelm them, and they leaped about, unable to run. That night some of us had a feast of venison. After a long time a crust formed on the snow, sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a man. Constructing rude sleds, we had sport with sliding down the hills. This was sweetened by the likelihood of attack from the roving bands of wolves made desperate by hunger. As the winter grew colder they became fiercer, and sometimes at night they would howl almost within the shadow of the stockade. In the full of the moon a party of us sallied out among them, yelling. Instead of scampering away, they gave us howl for howl and awaited our coming. This was more than we had counted on, but as no one would be the first to halt or to turn back, we dashed in

among them. The fight was furious, and had not our cries brought forth reinforcements, the odds might not have been much in our favor. Several of us were severely bitten, one man dying a week later of a wound in the throat. Orders were therefore issued against any more wolf fights; so we were reduced to the very rear rank of stagnation. But this life did not for a moment pall upon old Limprosus. He thumbed his books and laughed over the bloodless jests of Greece. He was much taken with a flint named Diogenes. It was he, if I mistake not, who, when compelled to offer on the altar of Diana a sacrifice of blood, took from his own body a louse and cracked it on the stone.

Sempre, since he learned that the woman who had wrecked his brother had also tortured the heart of the old soldier, was more tolerant of him. Sometimes he talked pleasantly with him about his book. But the sacrifice of the philosopher was too much for him. With impatience he cried out, "Yes, they were a clean lot," whereupon Limprosus replied, "They did not bathe themselves into voluptuous senility."

"Ha, you may well say, and the readiness with which your philosopher found a victim for the sacrifice proves that he did not bathe at all."

And nothing daunted, Limprosus replied: "The shell which he carried about and in which he existed may not have been so clean as the body of a female charioteer, perfumed for the embraces of a licentious Senator, but his soul may have been spotless."

"His what?" cried Sempre.

"I said his soul."

"Oh, that mystic something that lives after death."

"That eternal something that cannot die," said Limprosus.

"Ah," replied Sempre, with a touch of sadness, "and have all of the great enlightening forces of Rome so come to naught? Was it not great Julius who refused the punishment of death to an offender because he said that his suffering would be short, that he must, at the end of this life, sink down into nothingness? In him Rome found the culmination of her greatness and her wisdom, and if such wisdom scoffs at the notion of an after life, then how low and superstitious are we to believe in it! Wisdom banishes the gods. Weak men call upon a hoped-for Power, unseen of mortal eye. Nature cries shame upon a belief so contrary to her processes. Limprosus, if I believed as you do, I would feed my impotent body to the hungry wolves and let my soul take its flight."

The old soldier smiled grimly, the light of a torch falling upon his grizzled beard. "There is a difference, my son, between speculation and belief. Beyond the black shadow called death there is no certainty. It is true that it is the more ignorant of Rome that believe in the gods. It was the wisdom of Socrates that disbelieved in them. Caesar's wisdom halted with his unbelief. May not the wisdom of the philosopher have gone further, being less material—gone further and found a more sublime form of deity?"

"Limprosus," said Sempre, "you remind me of a man searching in the dark, by the road-side, for a golden coin which he supposes in all probability some one must have lost. He has no proof that the coin has been lost, and his stimulus in searching for it arises from his own poverty."

"Ah," Limprosus replied, "your figure is not bad. It is the need of a god that causes us to search for him."

"No, it is the vanity of man. It is his unwillingness to let the ash-heap be the end of him. How often you hear a man wish that he might see this world a thousand years hence! Having accomplished but little, he feels that he has lived in the wrong time. Having done much, he is loath to leave his great possessions."

Limprosus was silent for a long time and then he said: "Strange thoughts may come to the most obscure of earth. Lightning may miss a towering tree and strike a sapling; and thus emboldened, I may say this: The world has so advanced that I believe that in our day something wonderful may happen."

Sempre scoffed. "We needed no such preparation for so commonplace a saying. In all ages man has thought that something was going to happen, and then when an age has passed, men, in looking back, thought that something wonderful had happened."

"But what difference can it make to us?" said I. "Even though great things do take place we shall know nothing about them, anchored as we are in this sea of banishment. Is Rome so easily glory-gorged as to stop feeding now? Gaul has been tamed, but Germany still is wild. The great thing which you predict, Limprosus, must be the sacking of Rome."

Limprosus shook his head. "That might be and yet not mean so much to man. The something that I refer to might be in the nature of the establishment of a god. When I was in Britain the first time, there came on a trading ship a young Jew named Milthias. He read to me strange things out of a book that I could not read, mostly musical odes by one called David, a king. He spoke of a god

all wisdom, who had revealed himself only unto the Jews because he had chosen them as his especial people. In the temple, renowned throughout Judea, there were no images of brass or stone, but all the people worshiped the invisible god. His promises unto them were always kept. Many men from many countries have imparted many strange things to me, to while away the tedium of life, but what this young man said remained with me, coming back to me in my dreams."

"What became of him?" I inquired.

"He was captured by the Britons, carried off and killed, perhaps. I should like to see him again. I should like to go to his country. There they have a home life, so sweet and so simple, so pure, so loving—where age is held in such esteem——"

"Where they welcome gray beards with a triumph," Sempre broke in. "And that is the country for you, Limprosus."

"Such virtue stands as a shame to Rome," Limprosus replied. "I used to sit by the hour, sweetly dreaming as he told me of his home life. I did not pay much heed when he spoke of the soldiers of his country, though they had been brave and valiant. It was love—the tenderness of it all—that charmed me. But sometimes he would drift away into absurdity. It is a belief held by all, that the nation is to

be delivered from its enemies by a royal master who is to appear mysteriously in glory and full power. Ridiculous, I should say, but so poetic and so full of faith that it is charming to the ear. In this youth's country, so the fable goes, there was a strong man named Samson. On one occasion he wiped out a multitude of his enemies with the jawbone of an ass."

"I should like to have it to throw at those sleep-murdering wolves," said Sempre.

We all applauded this, and Limprosus laughed in his good-natured way. "He told me of many other men of note," Limprosus continued, seeming to enjoy the vision of the young Jew. "One of them, son of the poet David, was the wisest man that ever lived. He helped himself to some three hundred wives."

"Whew!" Sempre whistled. "Wise and with so many wives? Was this a part of the home life so loving, so sweet and so pure?"

Thus it was, night after night and day after day, while the merciless winter slowly wore on toward the spring. Once, far in the night, Limprosus asked me if I were asleep, and when assured that I was not, he said: "I have been dreaming of Milthias, the young Jew."

CHAPTER VII

In Lodbig's Town

WE CHEERED the coming of the spring, though it was a mere season, a name in the air rather than the bringing forward of an occupation to rub from us the rust of weariness and of sloth. With the melting of the snow the wolves departed from the neighborhood. In the shortened night we heard no sound save the hooting of owls and the lowing of our own beef cattle. It has been said that in all ages man has craved a newness, but here was a newness, a raw edge of the world, made old and contemptible by want of association. Man must have new things among the old, the old to offer the charm of history and the new to lend the spice of novelty, but in the ever fresh alone there is nausea.

Tiberius was a man of great business, but our position must have been unknown to him. Sometimes our supplies from Gaul ran short and somewhere there was corruption, for no attention was paid to complaints sent across the channel. As there seemed to be no pros-

pect of relief from this worse than useless duty in Britain, and as our supply of grain and especially of vegetables was uncertain, our commander resolved upon laying out gardens and wheat-fields that we might supply our own wants. The land in the immediate vicinity of the stockade appeared to be thin and unproductive. Selection turned to a large area several miles distant. A detachment was set to the work of making a road. The labor was hard enough, but I enjoyed it. In even the idlest of men there is that which applauds the accomplishment of the useful.

Some of the villagers had been impressed, and though able-bodied, they were worthless, slow and heavy as bog water. So far as we knew, the tribes were all inclined toward peace, or at least toward non-interference. But late one afternoon, just about the time the squad that I was with had turned homeward, the thickets on each side of the road suddenly seemed alive with war-smeared savages. There was naught to do but to fight, and we fought, fewer than fifty against what appeared to be an innumerable horde. I know not how long the struggle lasted. I remember more than one bare bosom that spurted blood in my face. I recall one towering youth, magnificent in his rage, beating upon my buckler with a spiked club. His lu-

minous eye grew suddenly dim, as if a shadow had fallen upon it, and I knew that my sword had reached a vital part. Then came a shower of stones, impossible to ward off, and then—darkness, nothingness. It seemed that I was struggling to come back into consciousness, but meeting an obstacle, a something that clutched me and put a deadening weight upon my head, I was restrained and pressed down into the mire, to know nothing. Time and time again this was repeated, and then there came the dazzling of lights and, with a feeble start, I was awake with the sun in my eyes.

I was tied to a horse and was moving. Soon afterward the motion of the horse ceased. Some one seemed to be looking at me. A hand was passed over my face, and then I was loosed from the horse and taken off, though my hands were still bound. I was as yet too much dazed to take close note of my surroundings, but I observed a maiden, tall and splendid, after the form of the brave creature that had stood so high in the chariot. She bathed my head, where I had been struck with a stone. Sharply she spoke to a man who stood near me with a club, and I knew that she was commanding him not to strike and that she must have saved my life. She was in some authority, for those that came

within the range of my fitful vision paid deference to her. The halt was short, but by the time the journey was resumed I was so far revived as to be able to sit upon the horse, with my feet tied. There was no possible chance to escape. There was naught to do but to look about me as we crossed hill after hill, going deeper into the wooded country.

The woods were so thick that it was impossible in the dark to make way through them; so when night was come the caravan halted. Digging holes in the ground, they made fires in them to cook the evening meal. They untied my hands and I was eager enough to eat of the coarse food which the maiden brought to me. The flame from a smothered fire burst through and lighted up her face, and I thought of the slave market in the Temple of Castor, where beautiful women, her sisters in beauty and in race, were exposed for sale. On my finger was a gold ring, the only relic of my father's wealth, and taking it off I presented it to her with a bow. She took it, smiling, and put it on her finger, trying one after another to select the one which it fitted best or adorned the most. She held up her hand coquettishly to admire it. Whenever I could observe a man's countenance in the dim light I saw that he scowled at me, and I won-

dered how long the maiden's authority could prevail over their desire to end my life.

Early in the morning we set out again, passing, as before, over hills and through marshes. Though my head was still dull and painful with the wound, yet I felt strong and my hand burned with a desire to seize my— and then with a pang in the heart I wondered what had become of my sword. There was no way of finding out whether or not any of our men escaped. But so packed about with a wall closing in upon them, it was out of reason to hope that any of them had cut their way through to liberty. Was I, then, the only survivor? There were no other prisoners. But ours was only a fragment of the great body of barbarians that engaged in the battle. Then they were not all of one tribe and had, after the massacre, divided the spoils. There was no booty, save a number of spades and picks, which the Briton must despise, and our short swords, which he did not know how to use.

During the entire day my captors pushed forward. When night fell they did not halt but continued their journey, which gave to me the impression that we could not be far from the permanent habitation of the woman whose property I seemed to have become. This was the truth, for soon I saw lights and heard the

barking of watchdogs. We passed out of the woods, slowly ascending a hill through what appeared to be a field. A chant was raised, and was answered from the hill. Out came pouring men, women and children, eager to learn the news of the expedition. When they beheld me, tied helpless on the horse, they shouted and clapped their hands. The village, as I could see by the fires burning here and there, was surrounded by a rude wall of stones, fallen trees and mud. The place within the walls was spacious, with stables for horses and kennels for dogs. In the midst of an open, which appeared to be a sort of forum or market square, there was a large building, low, but covering much ground, built of stone and logs, of no form, but formidable to behold. Spikes of tin and copper were driven into the logs, and at the broad portals, one on each side, were two war chariots, with horses harnessed to them, always ready for action. This I supposed to be the royal palace, and so it was.

Into this house, with a chain about my neck, I was led by the maiden. There was but one room, very large, with odd nooks here and there. The walls were covered with skins. There was a throne, set upon a platform of hewed logs and covered with skins. On each side of the throne, against the wall, stood

upright two stuffed cave bears, monstrous things as big as a horse.

The king came from his closet, a place curtained off, and I thought that at the sight of him all of the spectators —and there was a crowd of them—would prostrate themselves, but they did not. They held high their hands and cheered. He was king because he was their superior in arms, and they looked upon him as their father, giving him not so much of fear as of affection.

I was not compelled to show submission. He fixed his eye upon me, as he sat on his great oaken bench, his throne, covered also with skins, and spoke for some time. When he had ceased the spectators cheered. But I could see that he was disappointed with the result of the expedition, for he frowned when the leader came forward and delivered his report. This must have been concerning the property, but when he spoke of the massacre, which I understood by his gestures, the king's face brightened. His daughter gave over to him the chain which held me, and after a few words he handed it back to her, her title to me. She put her arms about his neck and embraced him. Then I was led away to a prison and as I passed along an open way or street, boys came out slyly to leer at me, and one of them made a motion across his neck,

which meant that he would like to cut my throat.

The prison was built entirely of stone and appeared strong enough to withstand a siege. There were two windows, nearly at the top of the wall. On a ledge of rock, within reach, an earthen lamp was burning. But this was soon taken away, and so I was left in darkness. There were skins everywhere. My bed was made of them, two wolf hides on the stone floor. But after a season such as the one through which I had passed, a stone was soft. I fell instantly to sleep. But sometime in the night I was aroused by the furious barking of dogs and the war-cry of men. Could it be, I wondered, that the Romans were coming? I heard the clash of arms and words of command from one whom I took to be the king, but after a time all was quiet again and I slept. Early in the morning my breakfast was brought by an old man, fierce-bearded but not ungentle of manner, for he nodded his head and smiled and with gestures made me to understand that my eating would give him pleasure. I spoke to him, but he shook his head, understanding no word of the Latin tongue. My windows were to the southeast and I was grateful for the rays of the sun that fell aslant through them. The old man, interpreting my look, smiled and with signs assured

me that if he had his way he would make them bigger. Something about him struck me as being not unfamiliar, and while I was wondering, striving to settle it as to whether he were a vision seen in a dream or the product of stable recollection, it flashed across me that he was the brother of the owner of the goat. I put my hands up to my head in imitation of horns and bleated. He laughed outright. I remembered that once I had given him a bit of bread, and he had not forgotten it, for with a gesture he drew a picture of his gratitude. He would have remained longer with me, but a gruff fellow, attendant upon the door, called him forth, and he went out, with a show of regret, halting a moment before disappearing to smile and to nod at me. I felt certain that for the present my life was safe. It was my conjecture that the princess, who must love finery, would demand a ransom for me, led to suppose from the beauty and richness of my sword that I was not merely a common soldier but a man of position and quality. This latter surmise, however, brought me to grief. I had hoped that some of our men in escaping had taken my blade back with them, where it might be kept by my friends. At the least it had saved my life.

The prison was not small and I walked about, thankful for this great boon, the oppor-

tunity to take exercise, but lamenting when the sun withdrew from the windows.

The Britons were gluttons, eating many times during the day. I could hear them without, feasting. Some wretch threw a bone at my window. For a moment it clung to the iron bars and then fell to the ground, to be fought over by the great dogs. Twice during the day the old man fed me, always smiling and nodding. When he appeared late in the evening he was accompanied by the princess. The jailer put the lamp on its accustomed ledge. The woman stood surveying me. With the most courteous manner I could summon, I offered my food to her, with which she was much pleased. She accepted a small bit of the rough cake, nibbled at it and then returned it to me. When I pretended that her touch had added to its savor, she laughed, her beautiful white teeth gleaming in the lamplight.

Early on the following morning a blacksmith came in and locked a chain about my ankles, so that I could not run had I been so minded. I was then led forth to a small field just beyond the walls and set to work digging up stumps. The British, like all barbarians, scorned labor, but the opening of arable land was a constant question with them, for as their numbers increased, neighboring game grew scarcer, rendering bread a

more and more important factor of their diet. It was not only bread, but grain for their rude drink, that necessitated the clearing of the land. This new field where I worked was, as I supposed, the property of the princess. She came out to observe me, and was pleased at the vigor of my strokes. I knew that sulkiness would avail nothing. My only hope lay in obedience. Here and there about the field, and indeed to be seen whichever way one might look, were men armed with bows and spears. I had not been working very long before I noticed a colaborer, a young man that seemed also to be a Roman. He was digging a trench to drain a stagnant pool. When this part of his work was completed he came up to where I was delving at the roots of a great oak stump. I spoke to him and he answered in Latin.

"Don't appear too much pleased to talk," he said.

"Roman?" I inquired.

"Jew," he answered.

"What is your name?"

"Milthias."

"Oh," I cried, "I have heard my old friend Limprosus speak of you."

He looked up, without speaking, and his black eyes danced with pleasure. "Appear not to be much interested," he said. "Limprosus—tell me about him."

I was pleased to talk, and I told him all that I knew, that his words and what he had read from his book had remained with the old soldier. Then I asked him to tell me about himself. For several years, he did not know how many, but surely as many as five, he had been prisoner to King Lodbig, whose kingdom was so small as really to have no name. His territory was marked off with pictures cut upon the oak trees or by poles set up in the marsh. His subjects, all told, did not number more than fifteen hundred, and all of them lived in this one town. The princess that owned me was his only remaining child, her sister having been killed in battle with the Romans not long before. It was she who had driven the chariot into our ranks. It seemed impossible for any of the tribes to become great, there were such jealousies, for when one king began to show progress and ability, others combined against him.

There had been a great union of powers to oppose the Romans, and desperately they had disputed the landing of Caesar, but dissensions had afterward rendered their numbers less potent. Lodbig ruled over one of the smallest kingdoms, as the larger ones lay nearer to the sea; but he was ambitious as well as brave, and had set the trap for the Romans at the time when my sword first

tasted blood. I asked Milthias why it was that a king, even though a barbarian of so rude an order, would permit his daughters to fight the same as the men. He answered that it was not true of the women in general, but that those who stood in the line of succession to a throne must fight to win and retain the love and admiration of their subjects. My princess was named Vloden. Ordinarily she was kind-hearted, said Milthias, but in a rage she was worse than a devil. Not long before the first battle with the Romans, the time when her sister had fallen, Vloden had espoused the hand of a young noble, had selected him for his manly beauty, but as he proved himself timid in the face of the enemy, a petty tribe to the east with which her father was then at war she killed him with her own hand.

I inquired whether the old man had brought the word that we were making the road, and Milthias answered that he must have done so, as he came a few days before the force was organized to march against us. News had come that the Romans were starving, that they were so weakened as to be unable to fight. Detachments from three tribes had formed the attacking party, and all of our men, with the exception of myself, had been killed. When I told Milthias that I was but a

common soldier, he was surprised, having heard of my sword. He confirmed my conjecture that old Calo's workmanship had saved my life. He advised me, however, not to let the truth be known; and this counsel I was determined to act upon, though I knew that no large sum would ever be paid for my ransom.

"My father in Jerusalem is a rich man and would pay a large sum for me," said Milthias, "but the distance is so great that it is impossible to reach him. I have striven many a time to make the old king understand, but he believes in the riches and the power of none but the Romans."

A spearman came near us and we ceased to talk, but when he had gone away, to a corner of the field, Milthias said: "It is a lucky chance that has thrown us together. I was not until this morning the property of Vloden. This is her birthday and her father presented me to her. And I have news for you: You are no longer to be confined within those grim stone walls, but with me you are to share a hut, near the center of the village. They despise manual labor, but they know the value of it, and to keep us strong they will feed us that we may be of worth to them. Here comes our mistress, the daughter of the king."

CHAPTER VIII

The Storming of the Town

LIKE a child, a girl fond of viewing her dolls and her play-house, the Princess Vloden came out to behold us working for her. The envious briars scratched at her bare, brown ankles. A lover of fresh air and inured to the damp, she wore her raiment loose upon her, two lamb-skins opening wide upon her bosom, laced across with narrow strips cut from the hide of a deer. About her head was a burnished copper band which held in some show of submission her wondrous rebellion of hair. In the majesty of her strength and the freshness of her wild-wood beauty, how she would have put shame upon the bathed, steamed and anointed maid of Rome! Somewhere in a flower, a yellowish blue, I must have seen the color of her eyes. Could it be that this broad and voluptuous, this honey-holding mouth had with grimness set itself when with her own hand she had killed the man upon whom her heart in its passion had poured forth a wealth of sensuous favors?

We stood with heads hung low, and Milthias, who had learned her tongue, spoke words which seemed to imply our meek submission. She answered, making music of barbaric utterance. Then Milthias said to me:

"She desires that I shall serve as interpreter between her and you." I bowed, and she spoke: "You are not tall, but you seem to be of wonderful strength."

"The strength of the oak is not in its height."

"That is true," she said. I thought that she looked at me with admiration in her eyes. Was she pleased with her piece of property?

"You fought hard and you killed at least six of our men," she said.

"I was fighting to keep them from killing me."

"But you came to their land. They did not go to yours."

"The obedient go whither they are sent."

"That is true. What is your name and rank?"

"My name is Eradmus, and I am not the commander of our forces."

"Will you teach me to speak your language?"

"I would rather that you teach me yours," I replied.

"You are a flatterer. But Milthias shall

teach you. You will not find it hard. He learned it easily." She looked about and then added: "You have done much work."

"The incentive has been strong. I desire to please the Princess Vloden."

She had spoken of flattery, but she knew not the meaning of fawning. My remark pleased her. She said that she would treat me kindly, in so far as my conduct warranted confidence, but that if I tried to escape I should be cut to pieces and fed to the dogs. I replied that if I ever showed ingratitude I should not be fit for the dogs. I was fearful that this might prove too strong for her, but she was simple. I looked down at my chain and told her that with the removal of those links of restraint I could be of more service. "Even if I were so minded it would be useless to attempt to escape," I said. "The Roman camp is many miles distant, and if I should break my bonds and go free into the woods, I should starve or be eaten by the wolves before reaching there. For all the good I might be doing Rome, I may as well be here. I have fought hard and have received no word of praise." This was an appeal to her reason, and it did not fall wholly short of its aim. She called one of the spearmen, spoke to him and sent him away. The blacksmith came and took off my chains. She read gratitude

in my eyes and this seemed to give her more confidence than my argument had done, though my reasoning was sincere, for I knew that escape was impossible. In the idle gossip of the soldiers at the camp there had been wafted about the opinion that the emperor might withdraw all interest from Britain. If this were true, I, like Milthias, was to be left a slave until death should release me. No hope lay in ransom, and after the recent slaughter, if demands should be sent by Lodbig, his emissaries would be put to death. I spoke of this when Vloden had withdrawn from us, and Milthias said that surely there was no hope for me, just as surely as there had been none for him. And so my dream of glory was thus to end, in slavery. My sword, so thirsty for the blood of man, had drunk of it. But now, worse off than the noisy rioter for bread in the streets of Rome, I was the slave of a woman.

That night and for many nights thereafter Milthias and I lay upon the floor of a log hut, near the house which, for convenience' sake, I shall call the palace. Stretched upon wolf hides in the dark, I remembered what Limprosus had said, and I requested my fellow slave to entertain me with stories from his mystic country, and this he was willing enough to do, for, like the most of men who love poetry, he

found a pleasure in the past. When he had talked a long time, telling me many things that I could not believe, he asked me to tell him of my childhood, amidst the cold glitter of Rome. He could not understand why I had not loved my father and mother, but little he knew of the unsympathetic life in the city of all cities. I described the little Greek boy that my father had bought for me, and gave a picture as best I could of his hanging from a hook in the wall, a chain about his neck. The moon was shining through an opening in the roof and I saw Milthias rise up from his oaken pillow and sit upon the floor.

"And yet," he said, "your ownership of that poor little being was just as abhorred of God as your own enslavement by these barbarians. One is of a piece with the other. In both instances it was power."

But I could not bring myself thus to level privileges. I was a Roman, and Rome was born to rule the world. "But," said I, "you speak of God. You mean the gods."

"No, not idols, but the one, the living God."

"Ah, then you have offended him that he thus permits you to drudge away your life. If he is a god and is your god, why does he not release you and take you back to your people?"

He lay down again, and I thought that I

had vanquished him, but after a time he said: "We are not to question God's mysterious ways. The sparrow does not fall without his knowledge, and——"

"But if he does not help the sparrow, what good is it to know that he falls?" I interrupted him.

"It is not in reason that I can make you to understand," he replied.

"No, not in reason unless *with* reason. There is no god, Milthias, and there are no mysteries except the hidden ways of nature, and they are in mystery only because they are hidden from us."

"But behind nature—what?"

"Storms that wreck towns and sink ships. If the storm is the breath of a god, then his breath is evil. I believe as Julius Caesar believed."

"But he was called to his account, and at a time when he thought that his power was greatest. But when his time came he was as weak as the lambs that were killed to make a garment for Vloden. In the eye of the Lord he was not greater than your little slave that hanged himself."

For this speech I could have killed him. In my heart I believed that he was deserving of death, but he was my fellow slave and I liked to hear the sound of his voice, though

his Latin was not good. Limprosus and Sempre had taught me that argument was of no use, and for a long time I lay in silence. Then I requested him to tell to me stories from the strange book of fables which he called the Scriptures. He did so, and there was such power in his recital, such vividness in his pictures, that I wished to know the language of his country. He said that the tongue was now for the most part Greek, there had been such commerce with the Greek people, but that the household words were still Hebrew and that he would willingly teach me in so far as he was capable, but that it was hard to learn, though when once learned its richness and beauty would more than repay all of the cost. So, that very night, I began to take lessons of him, and how much easier it was to learn thus than from a book!

Under tuition of a most skillful master in Rome, I had shuddered at Greek, and had found all lessons hard enough, but now I learned easily and discovered in it a pleasure. Milthias reminded me of my promise to the princess, that I would learn her tongue, and that to please her I must do so. "It sounds harsh," said he, "but rugged words are sometimes more easily remembered than smooth ones, with their monotony of mellowness These barbarians, having few ideas, have but

a brief language, mostly the names of things. Yet there is a rough poetry in it, especially in their war chants. I said that they have few ideas, but they have thoughts, especially when they overeat and are in gloom. At such times their words seem as black as fragments out of a midnight sky. You must have heard a disturbance and a call to arms last night. A large deputation from a neighboring kingdom had come to demand a tribute which they swore was due to their king; but old Lodbig set his bristles and refused to pay. I was near enough to hear his speech. He stood in the glare of a torch, not far from the door of this hut. You might have thought that in his wrath he was borrowing peals of thunder, and was paying them back with interest into the skies. But let us sleep. To-morrow's work will be hard enough, a tribute which we do not owe, but, unlike old Lodbig, we cannot refuse it."

Sound sleep makes a quick dawn. It did not seem more than a moment after Milthias had ceased to speak when I was aroused by the rude shake of a spearman. As I was no longer a prisoner but a slave, my food was not prepared for me. For lack of a better name I shall call the open space a forum. Here, where log fires were kept constantly burning, Milthias and I cooked our morning meal,

fighting at the dogs that sneaked about to snatch at our broiling meat. Rain was falling, but the fires were protected by thatches of straw, supported by poles. By the time broad daylight came, the rain had ceased and everything was steaming in the summer air. From the hillside field I saw the struggling sun arise, firing dull vapors into gorgeous sheets of flame. Was not this gold and crimson spectacle enough to reëstablish, even within the breast of a slave, a belief in the immortal gods?

Sometime along toward the middle of the day a boy brought some food to us, but in the evening we prepared our supper. The night was soft with a great yellowish moon. How little like the moon that in dazzle of burnished silver I had so often seen as old Calo held me in his arms!

The people of the town were not ill-natured, and into the forum they came to witness feats of strength in the light of the great fires. One of them, an old and white-bearded man, plucked the coarse strings of a rude harp, and sang of the prowess of his fathers. Lodbig walked leisurely about among his subjects and there was no fawning, such as might be seen in a higher state of society. At no time during the day had I caught sight of the princess, but now she came forth, with the copper circlet gleaming on her head. She ap-

proached, and through Milthias spoke to me. "You are not grieving for your friends?"

"No more than my friends are grieving for me, which cannot be much."

"It would be of no use for you to grieve, for you will never see them more."

"It remained for your words to make me feel this, fair princess, more than I did."

She waved her hand. "Is not this a goodly sight, to see so many people happy? And could you not in time so far forget all that has been as to be contented here?"

How simple was her mind thus to indulge such a fancy! "When fortune has played ambitious man false," said I, "there is nothing left for him but to make contentment if he cannot find it."

"My father, the king, would speak with you." Lodbig came with slow and measured stride. I could have laughed at his garb, but not at him, for though well past his prime he looked a man that might well be feared in the arena. I made obeisance with all of the grace I could command, and so pleased was he that he commanded me to do it again. Then he asked me how many Romans there were in the stockade. To flatter him, I answered:

"Not so many as could with advantage to themselves meet you in battle."

"But there are many over the sea in Gaul."

"Yes, very many."

"The Gauls are more easily conquered than the Britons?"

"They are not so strong and therefore cannot fight so well."

At this he did not smile, but nodded, giving me credit for having discovered a fact. "Would your commander meet me in single combat?" he inquired.

"He would be unequal to you." This he also accepted as a fact. Then I remarked that if he chose to send me with a challenge I should be pleased to bear it. They say that savages have no sense of humor, but he smiled at this. "Ah," he said, "and he would come back with you to drink a horn of ale with me." After a few moments, and when he had become serious again, he said: "My father fought against the great man that first came from your people. He killed many of our men, but did not conquer us. Tell me about your country and your town."

I told him of Rome, but saw that he did not believe me. He was about to speak when a shouting at the gate distracted him. Instantly all was confusion. The gate was opened and in rushed a party of Lodbig's men, looking as if spent with hard chase. Then arose a loud call to arms. The king hastened to arm himself, and the princess fled toward the palace,

the nation's armory. I leaped up at this whiff of excitement in the air, longing for my sword; but I seized a war club and sprang forward to join the ranks that hastily were forming near the gate. There was such commotion that no one gave heed to me. Milthias was at my side, and out of the loud voices he caught the information that the king who had demanded tribute of Lodbig was coming in force to compel his demands. Drums made of hollow logs were fiercely beaten, and the war chariots were driven out, to reap a swath up and down the walls should the enemy succeed in scaling the battlements. I was afraid that it was a false alarm, it takes so little to excite barbarians, but it was not, for soon there arose wild cries without. Then came a thunderous battering at the gate. Stones came over in a shower, and one of them, striking a man who stood not far from me, felled him; and snatching up his sword, I rushed toward the gate, which now was yielding to the besiegers.

The gate fell, and in they rushed, yelling like furies. The sword was too long, but I soon caught clever use of it. I snatched a rude shield, which I well knew how to manage to best advantage, and never within sight of inspiring eagles did I fight harder, knowing that by this means I should not only purchase

exemption from slavish toil, but perhaps win my freedom. The chariots did not have room to operate, and they were worse than useless, their scythes sometimes tripping our own men. Old Lodbig towered in the thickest of the fight, and I saw the princess urging the men to greater daring. Now over the wall the enemy poured. Lodbig was falling back. Suddenly the princess flew to me, with my own sword and buckler, and I seized them and fought my way through a horde and rescued the king. Then together we fought, furiously as the numbers increased, and Lodbig's men, thus encouraged by our example, rallied and found new strength. The tide was turned. The enemy was beaten back, and out into the dark we followed them. A number of Lodbig's soldiers were killed and wounded, and it was a sad sight to behold the grief of those unschooled women, the widows of the combat. Among the wounded I found Milthias, severely bruised upon the head, a blow something like the one which had not long before deprived me of my senses. I carried him to our hut, and, while kindly hands held torches, I bathed his head and dressed it with a bit of rough cloth brought by one of the women. Nowhere now did I see the princess, and as I had no interpreter I could not inquire concerning

her. I felt in honor bound to return to her my sword.

There was not much rest that night, for the wailing of the women and the groans of the wounded drove sleep away. Milthias soon regained consciousness, and he sat up, pale in the light of the torch that had been left with us. He told me that I had saved his life, but I did not remember having seen him after the fight became interesting.

When morning was come I went forth to find the princess. The palace was free to all, and I entered. She was there, helping to take care of the injured, those whose bravery had been so noted as to warrant such a hospital. She smiled upon me as I came forward. I bowed and presented my sword and shield. She took them, and, disappointed that she did not bid me keep them as a reward for my services, the saving of her father's life, I went out, but not into the field to dig among the stumps. Men who had smiled to see me degraded now saluted me, and a grim old warrior offered me of his meat and handed to me a horn of ale.

CHAPTER IX

In the Home of the Princess

ALL during the day the forum was full of Lodbig's subjects, the men to boast, the women to admire and the children to wonder at bravery and at greatness. The women had been as brave and as determined as the men, but woman is willing to share her worth with man and then to glorify his half of it. I could never see why a man should be accounted valiant simply for fighting for his life, more than a cornered rat, both having the same instinct; but the king was elevated to the shoulders of strong men and carried about the town. When he touched earth again he called for me, and he hooked a copper trinket on my breast, but the princess, who stood near him, did not give me back my sword Milthias was still in our hut and I could not understand what was said to me, but the speeches must have been warm and eloquent, for the men, women and children clapped their hands and shouted. It looked as if they were about to give me back my liberty, but when they had beaten

their hollow logs and chanted a few more compliments to their own greatness and doubtless to their good fortune in possessing me, they turned to, as was ever in order, and began to eat and drink. No restraint was put upon my actions until, to satisfy curiosity with experiment, I made as if I would walk forth through the gate, and then I was warned to stay within the walls.

Trade makes a man sharp, and Milthias had been a trader. When we were lying on our skin couches, the night after I had been decorated, he told me that we were not now to be worn out with hard labor, but would be utilized not only as defenders of the town, but, under certain restrictions, employed in sallies against the towns of enemies. "It would not be in nature that the princess should be ignorant of her own charms," said he.

"Leading to what?" I inquired.

"To another sort, but to a more complete slavery of you. She will make you her Antony. She may marry you."

"Is her heart no more genuine than that?"

"The barbaric heart, like the heart of Rome, is for power. Did you ever see a more gorgeous animal? Would not a saint turn aside from his meditative walk to gaze upon her? Is there not in her smile something that bubbles the blood and sets on fire the

temple of the senses? Could she not trip the confident legs of the judgment and sprawl it on the ground?"

"She may be all that you say and, ordinarily, can perhaps accomplish all that your fancy is wont to picture, but as for me I would choose my sword and buckler. You may look into the temple of Janus, which is never closed except at a time of peace, and therein you will not find the statues of the Graces."

"Ha," he said, "but you will find the statue of the two-faced Janus; and may not one of his faces look toward love while the other — looks toward his own interest?"

"I am afraid that my figure was not a happy one," said I. "The two faces mean not so much the looking in different directions as the presenting of different countenances at the same time."

"True," he said, "and can you not present the countenance of love — toward her, while your other face looks toward liberty?"

"Oh, I am thick of head. You mean that I should deceive her, that I must pretend."

"Unless you should in truth love her, and then — to be all that she desires of you. In this, Fradmus, I am not unselfish, for my own hope, which I thought was dead, has begun to throb again with life. In the liberating of yourself you are to be my liberator."

"Let us wait," said I, not to discourage him and yet to put a caution upon his hope lest it might bound too high and kill itself with falling. "It does not seem, Milthias, that I was born to be shot through by Cupid, the boy archer. As much as possible the Roman youth, intended for the army, is trained away from all dangers attendant upon such shafts. My first playthings were the scraps of war, in my father's factory; and the first jewels that dazzled my eyes were the sparks that flew from the forge. My manners are the gestures of war. I am not gifted with those wooing graces which a woman, though a barbarian and herself a sharer in the fight, must demand of one whom she would enslave with passion."

He said that my argument against myself was not good. Lying there in the dark, he strove to put me in the light of favor with myself. Strength was itself a grace, and this he said I possessed. In valor he placed me high, and these qualities must always prevail. In my bravery and skill there lay an avowal of love for Vloden, she would believe, and I needed only to smile upon her, stealthily at first, as if I were robbing her of her sweetness. To hear him speak thus was amusement to me, and I laughed, and though I confessed it not unto myself, yet was I flattered.

"But would she not rather like more of boldness?" I inquired.

"No. Bravery in battle must be humble when of such a woman it would seek her love; but there must never be indifference. You must appear to tremble when she approaches, not in awe of her position as a princess, but in the blinding dazzle of her beauty. She is a woman."

"Ah," said I, "and being such, she is a stranger unto me. I had no sister. No girl was ever the companion of my youth. My mother was cold with a treasured grief, and my earliest nurse, a slave woman, sighed cool air upon me. Surely, Milthias, it was not the sailing of a merchant ship that gave you such knowledge of woman."

"In my country," he replied, "women and men mingle together in the ordinary affairs of life and in the temple where all come to worship Jehovah."

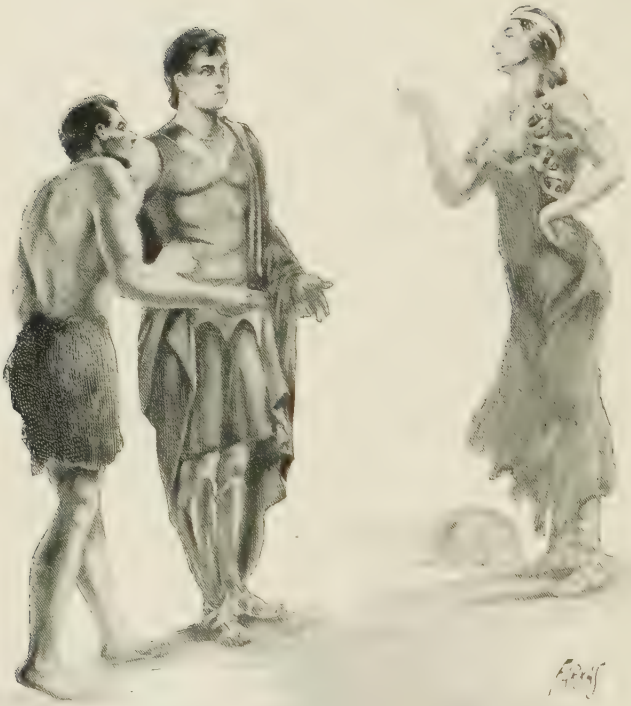
"Your god of war?"

"Our God of the universe."

"But have the women no goddess that they may more easily persuade to their purposes?"

"There is, as I have said unto you, but one God."

And so it was that no matter what we began to discourse upon, we as ever came suddenly to his one God. But surely this enslaved young



DECORATED WITH TRINKETS OF COPPER.

Jew was wise, for early on the morrow, while we were in the forum, the princess came coquettishly toward me, decorated with trinkets of copper and of tin that a slave in Rome would have scorned. I acted as if her beauty blinded me and this pleased her, for she laughed upon me, and in her voice there was music sweeter than all the hymns sung to the gods. She spoke, and I looked to Milthias to convey her meaning to me. "You must soon learn my words that I may give commands to you," she said.

"I can learn but few of them at a time, for, being so sweet, they would cloy me."

It was not easy for Milthias to make her understand this, but when he had succeeded she frowned upon me in rebuke. But her eyes were smiling. I asked her what was it her pleasure that I should do, how to bestow myself to serve her. I said that digging up stumps or killing enemies would be of equal delight to me. This lie gave her pleasure. When was it that woman ever demanded the truth except as it might be pleasing? She smiled upon me and said that my first duty must be to learn of Milthias. Then she withdrew herself, and at once I set forth with Milthias, walking about the town, so that he might tell me the names of the different objects. Round and round we went, repeating

my lesson. How much easier it was than study in a real school. At night, in our hut by the light of a torch, he put down words for me, on strips of bark, marking with a charred twig; but these represented not things, but ideas, and were not so easy to keep in my mind.

The old king, though friendly enough, was never sociable, but once when he was drunk he struck me a blow on the breast, almost to the force of felling me, but this was an outbreak of his good-fellowship, and as such his men took it, for some of them looked upon me with envy. Every day there was a sort of muster and a drill at arms in the forum, awkward and worse than rude, but exhibitive of strength and determination. Before long it was plain that Lodbig's ambition was about to lead him abroad against his enemies. If the expedition were to be mounted it would offer us a chance to escape, and I so expressed myself to Milthias, but he shook his head and replied that they would never set us on horses, that if we went we must go afoot.

"But some of those on horses may be slain," said I. "Then what is to prevent our getting away on the horses left riderless?"

Trade, which had made him sharp, had made him also cautious. "Every one of them would flee from even a victory to overtake us

and to kill us for our treachery," said he. "Our freedom must come of a more gradual emancipation. We must grow old in their confidence."

I reminded him that he had been there many years and remarked that I could not see that he had attained to such a growth. "But not until recently did I have opportunity to prove that I would fight for them," said he. "And besides," he added, "all conditions are now to be changed by the love which the princess must feel for you. You say that you are unacquainted with woman, and in truth it is impossible to know her in all of her moods, but the experience that I have had of the sex teaches me to guess, and some of my guesses are not wrong. She is in love with you."

Why should this put upon me, not a strength, but a sort of sweet and delicious weakness? The thought of settling down to a life there was abhorrent, and yet to feel that she loved me made me warm in the breast.

One morning I approached Lodbig, and with my broken words — Milthias not being with me—asked him to let me drill his men; but he frowned upon me for my impudence, or my ignorance not to know that his way was superior to mine. Perhaps it was, or at least I so far persuaded myself into this belief as to beg his pardon and to acknowledge that he

was right. I do not know whether it was my rashness on this occasion or whether it was his general suspicion, but when the time came for the sallying forth of the forces, neither Milthias nor I was included in the muster roll. I complained to the princess, but she turned me off with the remark that my strong arm was needed to protect the town in the event that the enemy might divide his forces and seek to capture and destroy the place. I asked her if she herself were going, and she shook her head. Milthias remarked to me, shortly afterward, that the reason of our not going was because she was not to go, that she wanted me near her. I could have cursed myself for being soothed by this, and I blushed, I know, in shame for my weakness, but I mused over it during the day and there seemed to be something sweet in the air. When night had fallen I walked about in the light of the fires, hoping to meet her, but she did not show herself. While Milthias and I were lying on the floor I asked him if he were in earnest, and he said that he was and that he could not be mistaken. Many times during the night she came to me in my dreams.

Early on the following day the march against the enemy was set on foot. Lodbig led in person. The people cheered him, Milthias and I among the rest. Now the

town seemed almost deserted. But there remained the soul of it, the princess. If she desired that I should be near her, why did she not come out into the forum? I resumed with Milthias the study of her language, but she did not come near me to encourage me with a smile. I was making progress. Was love so great a schoolmaster?

I had never seen the inside of her habitation. The outside was of no pretense. It was low, and its richness consisted in the bigness of the logs that composed it. An armed man stood constantly before the door, for, unlike the palace, this was not a part of the public domain.

It was near the noon hour when the princess sent for me. I wondered if the summons included Milthias, but when I bade him come with me the bearer of the command said that I was to go alone. I was glad that of late, with study day and night, I had made such progress toward the acquisition of this woman's tongue. I found her sitting in a spacious room with two maids attendant upon her, serving her with meat and drink. She was seated on an oak chair, large enough for a throne. Had I been invited to dine with her? She did not invite me even to be seated. She took no notice of me as I stood there before her, bowing time and again to

attract her attention. I waited a long time, stung to see the maids exchange mischievous glances at my expense. Finally she put by everything and turned to me. "Would you rather be here or with my father?" she inquired.

"Your Highness, on all occasions and under all circumstances I should rather be with you." I had to repeat this several times before I could make myself understood.

"But," she said, "you were disappointed when told that you were not to go."

"It is true, your Highness, and for the reason that I thought you were going."

When this remark, as a half-formed thought, entered my mind I fancied it an unmixed lie, and as such I uttered it, but coming forth in words, acting upon my ear and then seeming to sink into my consciousness, it was so much of a truth as to cause me to wonder at it and to feel ashamed of myself. I wanted to tell her to dismiss her maids, for, seeming to steal an embarrassment from me, they would toss it between them. The princess began to speak and the maids stood as solemn as if never in their lives had they thought to smile.

"If you had gone and had found means to escape, would you have run away—from me?"

"No, not from you. I would rather be a slave with you than free without——"

She stamped her foot and cried: "Out with you, liar. Put him out at the door."

I was thrust out, and now in disgrace I went to find Milthias to tell him that all hope was lost, murdered by my own awkwardness; but before I had gone far, and when I had not yet come within sight of my friend, one of the maids came running after me and, touching me upon the arm, bade me return to the presence of her mistress. Thrilled to the marrow, I hastened back to the abode of the princess. The guard at the door pulled aside the great bull-hide hanging there to let me pass in. The princess was still sitting on her oak chair, with her hands listless in her lap, looking down as if in deep thought. She did not hear me as I entered. I stood for a time, and as she did not look up I cleared my throat, and she started almost to her feet. "I have summoned you back to make you acknowledge that you are a liar," she bluntly said.

"But you would have me acknowledge something that I am not."

She arose and walked about the room, tingling me as she came near to me—delighting me with her beauty, a beauty that came at times in a flash, like the reflection of a sun-ray from a pool, almost blinding. She came close and gazed into my eyes, and I must have seemed weak to her, for I felt myself shrink-

ing. "How do I know that you are telling me the truth?"

"We know best that which we feel and yet which we do not know," I replied, and again I had to say it over many times; but finally she understood, but a frost-fall of suspicion nipped the budding smile into which her lips were about to burst. "But you are a Roman, and the Romans are liars."

"For the most part, your Highness, you now speak the truth. The Romans are educated, and education teaches one the necessity of lying." She shook her head. I could not make her understand what education meant. Suddenly she seemed to flame like a torch. "Go out," she said. "Don't come near me or meet me anywhere, in the forum or the street, until I send for you."

Sad of heart, I went away, thinking that she was displeased with me, but when I found Milthias and told him of all that had occurred, he grasped my hand. "She is fighting against her own love," he said. "Do not fear to be extravagant, for that is what she demands of you, though she is afraid of it when it comes; but modest assertion would be as tame to her as the feather of a dull-colored bird."

I waited during the remainder of the day, hoping that she might summon me again, but she did not. When night was come and

Milthias and I had gone into our hut, I lay, thrilled with each footstep that passed our door.

"She will send in the morning," said Milthias. But morning came, and so did the noon hour fall down almost straight before us, and still she did not send for me.

CHAPTER X

In the Moonlight and the Briars

IN THE evening, as I walked about in the light of the log fires, I saw the princess coming toward me. I turned back, but soon I was overtaken by her footman. He summoned me to appear before her. Again the bull-hide was held apart from the door for me to enter. The place was lighted with a glare of torches. The princess was moodily in state, on her oaken throne. She gazed at me as I entered. Her eyes snapped, and quickly too, for eyes so large. Evidently she had not commanded my presence that she might grant to me the boon of her pardon. She banished her maids. We were alone in the great room. Did she wish me to kneel to her? I did not, but stood, waiting for her to speak.

She spoke. "Why have you kept out of my way?" were her first words. This surprised me. It might not have astonished Milthias, who had traded in ships, and who had sold finery to women and who got at their whims and their natures in this way, but I was almost

astounded. Why, she had commanded me to keep out of her way. I said as much, and she frowned upon me.

"Why did you not break my command—to come to me? You gave me to know that you would brave anything for me. Again you have lied to me. How am I ever to believe you?"

Then Milthias was wrong. He had told me that with all of his boldness in fight, a man must sometimes be tremulous in the presence of a woman whose love he would win.

She arose from her chair and came toward me. She looked into my eyes, and I did not shrink from her. My anger was rising. It was impossible to please her. She gazed at me for a moment and then she said: "Do you know what I did with a man that was timid?"

"You killed a man who would not fight, but you cannot bring that charge against me."

"But you have humbled me into sending for you, and this came from your timidity."

"It came from my desire to obey your commands."

"Bah, you are weak."

I felt my anger rising. Who was she but a barbarian, little removed from a cannibal, thus to talk to me? "You would better let me go," I said. "It is not well for you to remain alone with me. I might be forced to lay rude hands upon you."

She slapped me on the cheek, and I seized her and choked her—tripped her, pulled her to her feet again, and slapped her as she had slapped me. Then I hurled her from me. She made no outcry. She did not summon assistance, but, red and panting, more beautiful than when in repose, she sank upon her chair and sobbed, this wild thing, but still a woman; and, stricken to the heart, I dropped upon my knees at her feet, and without a word she took my head in her lap and bent over me, her warm breath upon my neck. I know not with what words it would have ended, with what whims and reproaches on her part, for suddenly there came a clamor from the outside, the clash of arms and the trampling of horses. I rushed forth without looking back at her; and there, pouring into the forum, were old Lodbig's men, returned from their expedition.

The march against the enemy had been fruitless. He was found to be so well prepared that attack upon him was deemed unwise, and so there was naught to do but to return.

I felt that Vloden would not be so attentive to me, with either favor or anger, when her father was in the town, and such proved to be true, for she paid but indifferent heed to me, passing me in the street without even so much

as giving me a look. This state of affairs could not long endure, and in this belief I expressed myself to Milthias when he came in late one night from a feast. He told me to wait. But he brought news that was not agreeable. No matter how often a woman might have been married she was, if a widow, still the care of her father, and it seemed that Lodbig had selected a husband for her, a sort of prime minister, a powerful and shrewd man, looking fierce enough to frighten a legion. I had noticed, too, of late, that I was not treated in the forum with the courtesy that had been shown to me after my defense and rescue of the king, and it was accounted for by what Milthias told me. Once when the king sat in state to receive ambassadors from a neighboring power, I entered the presence chamber with a number of others, all being free to witness the ceremonies, and I thought that Lodbig might select me for the favor of a nod or a smile, but he did not. The prime minister frowned upon me.

A close watch seemed to be kept on the princess, and I could see that no matter which way she might turn or whatever she might be engaged in, spies were peeping about to note her acts, and I knew that eavesdroppers were alert to catch her words. It was not of wonder, then, that she took no notice of me.

Thus the time was wont to drag, pulling back, it seemed, with nothing for me to do, no fighting, no alarms; and the season sobered and winter came. One night, when a swirling snowstorm had driven all within doors and when the log fires were suffered to die out, I was aroused by a tapping at the corner of my house. Looking out, I saw some one, muffled up. A voice came as still as a whisper. I went out, approaching nearer to this timid thing, whatever it might be, and was soon enlightened with the thrill that it was one of Vloden's maids. It seems that the princess had outwitted the sentinels stationed about her house, had come forth through the snowstorm, and was waiting for me in a dark corner of the forum. The maid directed me, and with my heart beating fast I stole the way, and there she was, hiding, that glorious creature. She gathered me to her, and about me she put her robes, covering us both from the cold and the snow as we stood against a wall. Her breath was of the spring in its sweetness and her words were as spoken kisses. She was a barbarian and strong, but I was a Roman and stronger, and I gathered her unto me, in my turn, and she was as a child, soft and warm in my arms. The maid hid not far apart from us, to give the alarm if any one should approach, and soon she came running

with a smothered cry, and the princess fled from me. I went back to my dark hut, but the world was illumined.

Milthias was asleep. He had not known when I went out, and in the morning I did not tell him. It was too sweet to share, too modest to be spoken of; and I lay in the glowing dawn, thinking about her, feeling her breath upon my cheek. Milthias, arising and looking out, said that it was still snowing, but to me the dawn was rosy, for my heart shed a light over all the world.

I do not know how many days passed, all was now so full of dream, when along toward morning, after a clear night which blew shivers upon the town, a spearman came to me in the hut and bade me follow him. I refused. How did I know but that I was to walk into some trap set for me? But he said that Vloden was waiting for me. Still suspicious, I asked him why the little maid had not come, and he said that it was because other work, aside from bearing a message, was to be done, that he was to fight for the princess if necessary, that the maid, if seen, would be suspected, but that as he was known to be one of the sentinels stationed about her house, he was not thought to be in her service. We had spoken low and Milthias was still asleep. Treachery was so apparent that I continued

to hesitate, but while still debating I heard a voice that made me quake. The princess herself was at the door. I sprang to her, and would have caught her into my arms, but she bade me to stand off from her. She carried something wrapped in cloth. The moon was shining. The air blew cold. She shivered. I hastened back into the room and gathered up the skins of my bed to wrap them about her, but she commanded me to keep them for myself, that I should have need of them; and sweetly she said that it was not the frosty air that made her shiver. Then she bade me follow her, and I did, the tall spearman stalking behind us. We scaled the wall by means of a ladder made of tall poles, and now, with no word uttered, we went silently into the woods. For a time we walked, and after going through thick brushwood into an open space she halted, and turning to the spearman told him to go farther away, that she would let him know when he was wanted. When the spearman had disappeared Vloden began to unwrap her bundle, and then I saw a flash in the moonlight, my sword and buckler. She presented them to me.

"I have kept them as a part of your heart," she said, "but now I must give them back to you. There is a conspiracy to kill you Nothing but your own flight can save you. At last

my father, so long argued with, has given his consent to Blahn, the prime minister, and he will see that the sentence of death is executed. My faithful man, Canock, the one who has just left us, will bring two horses, one for you and one for himself; and when he has conducted you to the Roman fort he will return to me and tell me of your safety. I will call him."

"Wait," I said, and she looked at me, strong and beautiful, the rays of the full moon falling on her face. "But if I go, what will they think? What will they do with you?"

"They will not know that I have had a hand in it."

"But if my sword is gone they will know that you gave it me."

"My father thinks that I gave it long ago. He does not know that I took it back from you. There, you must go."

"And leave you to marry that brute? I will not go."

Something gleamed and fell, a tear. She was weeping, but with no sound. For a time she said nothing. But soon she was strong, and then she spoke. "You kept one of my commands, and you must keep this one. I will never marry Blahn. When you are gone my father will not force me."

And then with bitterness I said: "You married once and killed—him."

"I did not marry him. The ceremony was not. I was to marry him, in the evening, but early in the day there was an attack by the enemy. He took fright and broke from a position which he was commanded to hold, and as he ran, I threw a dart that brought him to earth."

"Vloden, it is not your killing of him that weighs upon me. He ought to have died. It is that you would have married him—that you loved him."

"Do not speak words to make me weak, Eradmus. Let me be strong, for I shall need strength. How did I know not to love him when I had not seen you? He was comely and I was younger than I am now, and I thought of him for a husband; but—but my heart was not touched by him. Now you must go."

"I will not. I will not unless you go with me."

"That cannot be. You must obey. If you do not, they will slay you, and then shall I slay myself."

Within me arose a mighty resolve. I would come with the legions and capture the town; but as I would not make her a party to this sedition against her father, I held my peace, though I told her that if I did go I should soon see her again. She said nothing, but

stood with her head bowed. I held forth my arms and she sprang into them, and long we were there, her warm cheek against mine; but suddenly she broke out of my embrace. "The day will soon break. You must go, and yet I would hold you with my own hesitation. I will call Canock."

"Wait. Not yet. Tell me again that no one has possessed your heart."

She caught up a handful of snow and held it out to me. The moon fell upon it and it gleamed. "This is me toward man," she said, and I understood her. And now it was time for me to go, but suddenly Milthias came into my mind. It gave me another excuse to tarry with her. "Milthias?" I said. "What will become of him?"

"They will not kill him. They will make him work."

"He will be a slave again, as he was when I came?"

"Yes, even the same."

"I will not go without him. I cannot desert a friend. I shall obey your command, for I know that soon I will come——" I came near telling her of my purpose. "I shall obey your command as far as it will not be treachery to a friend. Surely you would not ask me to prove unworthy of a man's friendship."

She called Canock, and I thought that she

would command him to conduct me upon my journey, but she surprised me by saying to him: "Steal into the town, awake Milthias, tell him to bring the wolf hides and to follow you."

Canock hastened away, and again I folded her in my arms, but not without a struggle, for she declared that I would make her weak. Suddenly she grew cold toward me. "Is there a woman in Rome——"

"Nowhere on this earth is there a woman but here," I cried, and a bird fluttered and flew out of a tree near by. Then I took her in my arms again and on my bosom she wept, but when we heard footsteps she stood back from me and was strong again. Milthias and the spearman came into the open space, and, without speaking again, Vloden ran away through the snow. Her long hair caught in the underbrush and I sprang to her, thankful for these friendly and helpful thorns, and once more I kissed her; but she struggled loose from me and again she ran, sobbing as she went. I followed, running as fast as I could in the entanglement, but, knowing the way better than I did, she outstripped me, and so I lost her.

CHAPTER XI

One Outran the Rest

I WANDERED about in the briars, hoping that she might be found again entangled, but she was gone. Reason told me that the only way to win her was to fight for her, and that the only way to fight was with help.

Soon I heard Milthias calling me. I came upon him and the spearman, leading two horses. I mounted one, with Milthias behind me, and Canock, mounting the other, led the way out through the thicket into a road. Day was breaking.

Our guide had brought dried meat, and along toward noon we halted to refresh ourselves. The weather was growing warmer and the snow had begun to melt. This rendered progress slower, as the horses' feet were inclined to clog; but we made many miles before night, and then we camped. Not daring to kindle a fire, we rolled ourselves in the wolf hides and slept. As soon as it was light we again took up our journey, and Milthias, knowing why I was silent, did not question

me. It seemed that every step that brought me nearer to what once would have been liberty, now conveyed me deeper into slavery, and, but for the belief that our commander could be easily set with his forces against the town of old Lodbig, I should have found no consolation. I had not forgotten my duty to Rome. But there is in all men something stronger than duty. It is love. One may discharge every duty and still be a weakling. It is going beyond all sense of duty that has made man great, that has made common man happy. It is rebellion in man that moves man to achievement. Honor is a great word, the eagle word of Roman life, and yet honor is called constantly to serve the dishonorable. My present state was quite enough to be parent of such musings.

I spoke to Milthias as to what it was my intention to accomplish, and he said: "Then you really love her. I had thought it was merely to gain your liberty."

"And so had I at first, but now I find that with the heart in prison there is no liberty. If the commander will not send a force, and me with it, against the town, I shall not answer for my conduct. Milthias, I would rather be a slave with that woman's love—but I must not draw such pictures. They affright me."

"Ah," he said, musing for a time, "and if you

were to desert and go back to the town they would kill you. Then of what avail would be your love? And your return might bring such reproach upon her as to rob her of life. They would kill her. The king is growing old, and as he has no sons the prime minister may succeed him."

"But Vloden will at his death be queen," I replied, a rat with cold teeth gnawing at my heart.

"Yes, if there should not be a rebellion," said Milthias. And then after a time he added: "No, you must not think of going back. It would be self-murder. Besides, if your expedition against the town should be formed and were to achieve success, you could not even then as a common soldier marry her, could you?"

"Not under custom, but it would not be against the law."

"You would be less valued as a soldier."

This was a truth that I could not dispute. Sitting so close to me, he must have felt me droop upon the horse, for he thought to console me by saying: "This passion may not endure. Great fires do not rage long; and besides, she herself may change."

It was some time before I spoke again. My fingers ached to clutch him and to hurl him from the horse; but even in violent love there

is that something which forgives, and I held my peace, though it was rough and hard to hold. Now, as day grew dark with the sullen approach of misty night, we came within the neighborhood of the Roman stockade, for with listening close we could hear the lowing of cattle. Not long afterward Canock drew his horse to a halt and said that he did not deem it wise for him to go nearer to the stockade. We urged him with the promise of kind treatment in the camp, with meat and wine, but he said that he had no cause to trust the Roman word. "And the Roman may not be all," he said. "The inhabitants of the village might lay hands on me, for, being in a way split off from Lodbig, they are not friendly with him. So, here will I turn back and tell the princess that I saw you safely arrived at home."

It would have been rude and ungrateful to compel one who so faithfully had executed his mission, so there was naught to do but to dismount and to turn our horse over to Canock. This we did, but before he left us there on a hill, curtained about now with a thick night, I felt that I must talk to him, apart from all ears save our own; and, following him a short distance, leading the horse myself, in fear that he might not halt when I requested him, I told him that we were now far enough. But even

now I did not know what to say. The thought in my mind could not well be drawn forth in words, though finally I said that it was of the princess I desired to speak. Then boldly I said: "You have seen by her acts that she acknowledges her love for me."

He must have nodded assent, but, as I could not see him, he spoke after a time, saying: "Yes, all could see that."

"But will she change her mind? That is what I burn to know."

"How can any one tell? She is a woman."

"Grim dog," I muttered, "don't say that, or the horses may wander home without you."

"I thought you wanted the truth."

"I do. But did you ever know her to change?"

"Sometimes she is kind, and sometimes she beats me. She is not always of one mind."

"Boar, would you deny me one sweet word?"

He did not know how to soothe, to flatter, and so I suffered him to depart. Milthias was stamping the ground to warm his feet, or was it impatience to break through this final crust of slavery, back once more into civilized light? Buoyant of heart, he hastened in advance of me down the hill, into a pasture land; and now, nearer the sea, there was no snow and we walked fast. I said to him that in his eagerness he might lead me wrong, and

he slackened his hungry pace. I told him what I had said to Canock and was disappointed that he did not call him a fool. "But you, Milthias—you do not believe she will forget me."

"Eradmus, is it that you love her or love your power over her? Will there not soon come a time when, forgetting her, you will be unmoved to feel that she has forgotten you?"

I bit my cold lip. From no source could there come a word of comfort. Should I reproach him with the truth that I had refused to leave the town unless freedom were likewise granted him? He saved me that trouble. Canock had told him as they were stealing through the thicket, out to the open place where I stood with Vloden. Now he spoke of it. He said that man might not know the one God and yet be possessed of a great soul. "And perhaps it is not mere passion, but your soul that loves her," he said. "It may have been at this time that both of your souls were born, since God himself is love. And if you feel that it is your soul enkindled by her own, or hers awakened by yours, then can there never come a death to such a love, though time might level all the monuments reared to human glory."

I put my arm about him, and onward we walked in silence. Now across the grazing

land and along the slope we saw lights flashing, but they were to the right of the fort and were from fires in the village. But they gave the location of the camp, and onward with more of vigor we pushed. I was warm to grasp old Limprosus by the hand and to tell him that I had brought back his friend. But why was all so dark and so quiet? A half wild dog ran past us, snapping his steel-like teeth. My heart began to grow heavy as we ascended the hill, and then I could have dropped upon the ground, for there was no fort, only the ruins, broken palisades and huts unroofed and echoless of life. The Romans were gone. Milthias sobbed aloud, but suddenly a great lightness of heart seized upon me. Come what might, I would go back to Lodbig's town. But toward this sorrowing youth I must keep unborn my determination.

"Come," said I, "experience has taught us that it is of no use to weep. Let us go down to the village and learn what we can of our friends."

I led the way and he followed me in silence. His eagerness was all of it gone, and he who had been so light of foot now seemed lame.

The hour was still early and we could see men and women in the street, roasting meat in the fires. We caught the incense of their venison. As we drew near, the dogs set up a

furious barking, and instantly there was a call to arms. They saw the shine of my steel, and, crying "Romans! Romans!" some of the bolder ones rushed toward us, throwing their spears as they ran. Swifter than their spears came the truth that to Rome they acknowledged no allegiance. If we stood to fight, we should be surrounded and killed. If we surrendered, death would be our fate. So we ran, as fast as legs could carry us, into the forest. The villagers did not follow us far, and we felt reasonably safe until daylight should discover us to our enemies. No matter which way we might go, they could, with their horses, soon overtake us, so, giving up all hope of reaching Ledbig's town, I thought it wise to work our way around to the sea and there to hide beneath the cliffs until perchance a ship might, in passing, heed our signals of distress. Milthias agreed that it was about all that we could do; so we stole through the forest, out upon the bluffs and then down upon the sands of the sea. It was all I could do to keep Milthias from shouting when he heard the roar of the breakers. The wave had been his home. Here on the wet sands we spent a bad night, and when morning broke there was some little cheer to find that the day was wrapped in mist. We were now without food. With no hope of escape could we look toward

the forest. Our only chance lay out upon the shaking quilt of the sea. Broader day revealed that we were not far from the village. We could hear the barking of the dogs.

"Gods, if they should scent us!" I muttered deep.

"God, you mean," my friend replied. "Let us commend ourselves to Him."

"Let us, dying, kill as many as we can. But you have no sword. Gather up those larger pebbles. Some of them are big enough to crush a skull."

"I will. So David was armed, but he had a sling."

We hidingly crept along the beach, to get further away from the village. Suddenly we both of us halted at once. Coming toward us were a band of Britons. Hoping that as yet we were unseen, we turned about, bold to make trial of sneaking along the base of the cliffs and to pass the town. We turned a sharp ledge of whitish rock that slowly was yielding to the battering ram of the sea, and, stumbling over fragments that lately had been broken off by the waves, we were pushing forward when I heard Milthias, almost beneath his breath, speak the name of his deity. He clutched my arm and pointed. The sight was thrilling. In a cove, eaten far into the sand, several boats were at anchor.

Ignorant as to whether or not they were guarded, not caring in truth, since here was offered a sight of freedom, we ran as fast as we could. The band discovered us, and from throats that seemed of brass arose a mighty yell. I looked back and saw that one giant fellow outstripped the rest.

There was no way to elude his fleetness. He would overhaul us before we could possibly reach the cove wherein the boats were anchored. So, telling Milthias to run as fast as he could and to make the boat ready while I hung back to give entertainment to this bounding buck from the forest, I halted and faced about. He made a great leap and flung his spear, and catching it with my buckler, I turned it down into the sand, but pretending to have received a mortal stroke, I drooped and fell. On he came with a shout, and catching up his spear I arose with it and planted it in his breast. He fell forward upon the spear and the point pierced through him. The other barbarians were yet some distance behind, and turning again to flight, I ran to where Milthias was making ready to shove a boat out into deeper water. He was in the craft and was working with the bull-hide sail when I reached the brink of the cove. Without halting, I leaped into the boat, and out it shot under the force of so violent a shove. The

wind that had blown away the thick mist served us well, for over the waves the boat lightly danced, lapping like a thirsty dog; but the chase did not end here. Our pursuers leaped into boats and sped out after us, but one of them, being overloaded, was soon swamped. One boat that was left gained on us for a time, but Milthias was a fine sailor, seeming with graceful knack to skim along the swift-flowing valleys of the sea; and so we sped from our pursuers, seeing them last as their spears gleamed on the crest of a billow. But the sea grew so rough that we were in danger of a death in brine. Sometimes it would seem that our bark could live but a moment longer, and more than once I gave myself over for lost, but onward we continued to skim and to plunge. That which threatened us most, the quick, short plunges of the sea, came from one of our surest promises of life and liberty, the narrowness of this goose-pimpled thigh of the ocean. And, in the dark of the night, we struck upon the sands of Gaul. All was lonesome along the shore, but we saw the glimmer of lights not far away, and thitherward we bent our weary steps, soon reaching a small town, a mixture of all nations; and here we were given food and a place to rest.

CHAPTER XII

In the Town and on the Ship

IN THIS town we learned that the Roman cohorts had been withdrawn from Britain some three or four months before, and that they had marched doubtless to garrison a fort somewhere along the German frontier. I said to Milthias that it was of no use for him to tramp across the country merely to bear me company, that on some trading vessel he could work his way back to his native land; but he would not hear to this, declaring that he would see me safe with my own company before turning his face homeward. This was noble of him, though useless; but no amount of argument could dissuade him. So we set out on another journey, not knowing whither we were to go. The weather in Gaul was much more temperate than in Britain, and soon we came into a country where vineyards were turning green beneath the touch of spring. Here and there were stationed small bodies of Roman troops, but mostly old soldiers that had served their time and who were to settle down as

citizens. But nowhere did we come upon the track of my division; but after changing directions a number of times we arrived at a garrisoned town where I received news. The cohort to which I belonged had been sent to far-off Jerusalem. To me this had a most appalling sound, for now it seemed that every step that made greater the distance between me and Lodbig's town was heavy and sore. But Milthias was delighted. "As for myself, I could not have hoped for anything better," he said. "And since you know that it is impossible to go back to Vloden, you might better be in Judea, that land of culture and refinement, of the earth's greatest wisdom, than to be here among half-civilized people. If there should come a war in that part of the country it would be one——" But he checked himself. "There cannot soon be a war between the Jews and the Romans. Our people are thoroughly conquered, so far as the sword of man can conquer them, but there is coming One whose sword will be as a flaming wrath, One who will deliver us from our bondage."

"I cannot remain here now, even if I should choose," said I. "The commander of this post will order me to join my legion."

And such proved to be true. I presented myself to him, in his spacious quarters, where he looked more like a gentleman of leisure

than a soldier; and though his ear had long grown dull, he requested me to tell my story. I knew that he desired it to be brief, and I made it brief. But he asked me many questions concerning the people of interior Britain, and into my breast there flew the hope that he might be thinking of planning an expedition against Lodbig; and to this end I made bold to question him, but he shook his head. He knew, by looking at me, that I had a long time still to serve, and he said that I must report to my centurion at Jerusalem. "With all of her richness and her power, Rome can spare none of her trained soldiers," he went on, looking upon me admiringly, I thought; and then, inquiring my name, he turned to his secretary and commanded him to write. The result of this command was an order, which was folded and given to me, a passport which he said would procure me passage and accommodation on any ship owing allegiance to the emperor. Then I told him about Milthias, that he and I had been slaves together, that we had fought—that it was his management of the ship to which I owed my life, and I requested that a passport be also written out for him. This did not strike the commander with favor. He said that Milthias was a trader and had never borne arms for Rome. That was true, and had not the officer been

kindly this would have ended it, but I saw by his countenance that he was inclined to stretch a privilege, and I began to plead with him. He cut me short by turning again to his secretary; and so the order for Milthias was written. He grappled me to him when I gave him the parchment.

Now we retraced our steps toward the sea, veering off in the direction of a town where touched ships from all parts of the world.

"Is not your heart growing lighter?" Milthias inquired of me as we walked along a pleasant road.

"It is not lighter and can never be," I answered. "Ah, what a blessing never to have known! I cannot drive her from my mind. I can see her now as she looked when she first came out to the field, the briars catching at her brown ankles. In all the world there is not such beauty, such grace."

"Wait until you have seen the black-eyed maidens of Judea," he replied.

"But I have heard that a barrier is set up between them and strangers who do not profess their barbaric faith. It must have been an old Egyptian that told me."

Milthias did not reply immediately, and I knew that I had struck upon a fact. After a time, however, he said: "You are not blind to

truth, and perhaps you may see the truth of their faith."

"But if I should embrace it they would always suspect me. In their sight I am but a heathen, and in my eye they must ever remain ignorant of the greatest of all truths, that all superstition is unworthy of credence since Julius Caesar put forth his private dictum against it."

"Eradmus, you should read the Scriptures; and this reminds me that of late you have been a truant to my language, preferring to study a tongue which promised and which gave more immediate sweetness of reward. But when we are on board ship you must take up the study of Hebrew, and as you learn to read the word of God——"

"All gods have had their words," I cut him off. "And what has been written about them in Rome and in Greece would freight a ship. But I will study your language."

Sometimes we walked for miles without talking, except to speak in brief comment on the scenery or the birds that flew up as we passed along. At one place we found much excitement attendant upon the rumor of a Frankish raid. But with the coming of daylight we pushed on.

While the day was still young we saw a great cloud of dust far out over the country,

and it seemed to be floating toward us. Soon we heard lamentations and saw frightened people fleeing from a small village. Off on the horizon a mighty storm seemed to be coming thundering; and knowing that we too, should be slaughtered, we fled with the rest, though descrying no place of safety in the direction of our flight. But after a time we came to a ruined villa. The ruin was level with the ground, with grass covering the most of the stones that lay scattered by. Into the thick weeds and the mold of the cellar we leaped, and here crouched down. Nor had we long to wait, for the thundering came nearer and nearer, and with a sly peep I could see the wild and fearful Franks sweeping past.

We lay there a long time, fearing a belated fragment of this storm, and when night had come we stole forth to resume our journey. But the country was the most of it laid waste, and though weak for the want of food, we continued to struggle onward, hoping soon to pass out clear of this Frank-swept territory. Along toward dawn, in the fading light of the moon, we came to a deserted habitation that had been set on fire but which had not burned; and here, when day broadened, we found fragments of food scattered about. So pressing was the need of sleep that we rested

until late in the afternoon, when our journey was taken up again. In the evening we came to the timbered wall of a small town, and after hammering hard upon the gate we were questioned and then admitted. Here were native troops, commanded by Roman officers who looked with suspicion upon their men. A lieutenant told me that as the Frankish raids had thrown the country into a state of unrest, no confidence could be placed in the Gauls; and he thought that it might be well for me to remain until some fifty legionaries should arrive from a neighboring town. This was a compliment, but not an order, and I had only to remind him of my duty, which in all expedition should draw me to a distant place. So, while the day was still fresh with the dews of the morning, we again took up our march.

Milthias taught me Hebrew as he had taught me the language of Vloden, by pointing out objects and giving their names; and these were easy to remember, but mere words were hard. Some of them, though, were full of a wild music, ringing like the clang of a spear struck against a shield of brass; but they all of them sooner or later led to the national superstition, God and the prophets. But nowhere in Greek, and surely not in Latin, were there such sonorous poems as some that

he recited. I thought it strange that men possessing such war cries did not all of them die rather than to bow to the conqueror, but Milthias again reminded me that when the real sword of the Jews should be drawn, all opposing weapons of steel would crumble into rust.

From a hilltop we saw the sea, and near it a town, red and gray in the mist of the dying day. Again the scenes were of peace, with vines on the hills and with cattle grazing in the valleys. We reached the town before the gates were closed, and here was life in the activity of trade. In the streets were crowds of people, bent upon enjoyment after the tasks of the day, and the wine houses rang with merriment. During all the time of his captivity Milthias had managed shrewdly to keep a little money, and now we went into a place, half theater and half wine house, to refresh ourselves. On a sort of stage a Gaul was roaring the bravery of his race, and sitting with great wine cups before them were Roman soldiers, quietly laughing at him. Milthias and I bore in our appearance no air of importance, and we were neglected by the underlings who served the guests, till, with a loud knock upon the table, I brought one of them, dancing in his haste. Some of the soldiers invited us to join them, and soon we were in good fellowship, with song and story.

The most of the Romans were new men, who had never seen steel bite steel except in the friendly nibble of play; and when I had related an experience in Britain they urged me to give them more.

In this place we had the fortune to meet the master of a ship that soon was to sail for Gaza, and this was of so happy a circumstance that Milthias beamed with pleasure. We showed him our passports, this Phoenician, and he said that while he was not in any sort of obligation held to obey, yet we were free to go with him. I suspected that this meant hard work for us, and such was true, for on the following day I learned that he had disposed of the services of two of his men.

Our cargo consisted mostly of timber, of grain and of wool, and on a day when the wind was strong we set sail. There was not now much work to be done, but of such as there was I performed my part of it cheerfully, and so did Milthias. Knowing all about the sea, he was given a responsible place among the crew, and, apologizing for myself, I said to the master that my most important service would be the defense of the ship against pirates. He took this in grim earnestness, replying that hard work in that line might be demanded of me. But the days passed and nowhere was there the sight of a sail. Some-

times in a calm, when our ship nodded beneath the stars, Milthias would ply me with my lessons in Hebrew. All objects within range had been pointed out and named, and now there remained only words, and what words some of them were, so long and hard to pronounce! But he was a patient teacher and I was eager to learn. Once he heard me talking to myself, in the tongue of Vloden, and he said: "Ah, you have not forgotten."

"The mind cannot well forget itself, and she is my mind," I replied.

"Her language, I mean," said he.

"No, I cannot forget that, for it is a part of her."

"But is she as vivid in your mind as she was?"

"Gold does not change its color, and she is gold," I answered; and the master, who was standing near and who had heard our talk, said that if we were talking about British maids he could tell us something about them. Once, when his ship had nosed up into a cove for water, his men had captured a British maid and had brought her on board. She was so comely that he thought to realize a good price for her. She appeared to be docile; but when a liberty was granted her, she leaped into the sea and was drowned. "They are a worthless lot," he said.

"Worthless for the purposes of barter when dead," I replied. "However, you could but think more of her after she had drowned herself."

"I could but think of what I had lost in the drowning. She would have been a fit waiting maid for an empress."

I could have told him of one that would have made a fit empress, but to me Vloden's name was too sacred to mention in his presence. As I mused upon her, of the possibility of her captivity and enslavement, the system of reducing a human being to a chattel became odious to me, but I knew that it was love and not justice that so inspired me. And how far from love is justice, and the more powerful of the twain is after all but a glorified selfishness.

For a long time the weather was fair and the sea favorable for progress, but about the middle of the fourth week a violent storm arose and we were likely to be wrecked. As for me, I was afflicted with such nausea that death would have been welcomed as a relief. Good weather soon came again. however, and onward our ship sailed, appearing none the worse for the cracking of her joints. Not at set times, but every day, I took lessons of Milthias and I was now able to talk to him fairly well in his own language. It is not the man of deepest mind that learns a new lan-

guage the easiest. Though no such attempt was made, yet at school never could a philosopher have been made of me. Oratory, thought to be one of the essentials of a successful soldier, was one of my failures, but the readiness with which I grasped at a language was somewhat of a marvel to me, though, as I have hitherto observed, I could not have learned thus easily from a book. And I believe that if Milthias had held a book in his hand it would have chilled me.

The master and the crew were mortally afraid of pirates, dreading every day and every night an overhauling by them, but I rather looked forward to such a diversion, though Milthias warned me that they were more to be shunned than barbarians on the land. But the days passed and the weather grew hot, in this the summer time, and still, with the exception of a squall now and then, there occurred nothing to disturb our course. One day there were whispers of a mutiny, but this little breeze of excitement fell into a calm and left to us nothing. The master was a shrewd navigator, and whenever he caught a good look at the shore, he could tell where we were. One night when the sky was clear he came to me, and pointing off at a reddening in the low sky, said that there lay the city of Gaza.

CHAPTER XIII

Across the Desert

IT WAS near the noon hour of the following day when we disembarked. The master of the ship was angered when I told him that I could not remain to assist in unloading his cargo. I reminded him that I was a Roman soldier, that work except for the empire was degrading. He replied that he had brought me from Gaul, without pay, and that he was under no obligation to Rome. I assured him, as quietly as I could, that he owed not only the privilege of sailing the seas but his life itself to Rome, and that if he further persisted in his attempt to degrade me, I should be pleased to go to the garrison and report the fact that I had slain him. He apologized, saying that he had drunk too much wine, and besides, was worried with the insolence of the laborers about the wharves, who, celebrating some sort of holiday, were loath to work. I told him that his apology was none too soon and that it fell short in humbleness. "What would the people think to see a soldier, though his clothes are old, unloading a ship?"

He answered that he had not expected me to carry a load, but to superintend the work for him, that many a soldier had private cargoes of his own. "The soldiers of the empire are not all of them above trade when there is money in sight," said he. Then he turned to Milthias, but before he could say anything my friend presented to him a bill for services as sailing master. At this he made violent gesture, being too dumfounded to speak. "Come," said I, "you must pay the amount demanded. This man has served you well."

He swore that he would not, and I looked at Milthias, expecting him to yield, thinking that all he desired was exemption from the work of unloading the ship, but he insisted upon his due. "Make him pay it," he whispered, coming close to me. "We shall have need of money for food and drink before we reach Jerusalem. Remember that we are in a civilized country now."

"You will have to pay," I said to the master. "For my services I ask nothing, remember."

"Ah," he growled, "and I remember, also, that he demands enough for both of you."

"Will you pay, or shall I report you for not honoring our passports?"

This brought him to the good sense of yielding. So, with many mutterings, he told out the money. There was no need of my report-

ing to the commander of the garrison, as to how I should now bestow myself. My duty as a soldier was plain, and that was to make all possible haste to Jerusalem. This met with the enthusiastic acceptance of my companion, who now, near the home which dearly he loved and from which he had so long been absent, urged that we should join a caravan that was already forming. So, early on the following day, we set out across a hot and dusty country. We did not aspire to ride a camel, but we could with comparative ease keep pace, and though we were in no wise accommodated except as to company and protection from the possible attack of marauders, yet the Arab who conducted the caravan demanded money of us. He said that times were hard and that the appetite of his camels seemed to increase with their growing years. He respected my sword and the marks of Rome upon me, but he looked with less favor upon Milthias, who he knew was a trader and therefore in a way his rival. We paid him, and from being solicitous he became arrogant, and sometimes refused to answer questions, particularly if they were asked by Milthias.

My friend was now in a land of tradition, holy to him, and sometimes he would walk along for hours, deeply musing. Here and

THE ARAB DEMANDED MONEY.

there an old well, walled about with stones, or a rock set upon end, was enough to cause him to break forth in Hebrew verse, the most of which I could not understand. The straggling groves of olive, mean compared with those of Italy, were a delight to his vision. He caught up a handful of sand, and, uttering strange lamentations, let it slowly sift down upon him. I asked him why he did it, and he said: "Over this blessed earth the feet of prophets have trod."

"It does not seem very blessed now," I replied. "It has not the greenness of Britain or the bright flowers of Italy. To me the land appears to have been cursed."

"Ah, yes, with invasion; with the irreverent foot of the stranger."

When we camped the first night out I thought that he would lament the whole dark hours through. There was no moon and all was black, save for the stars above and vagrant fires scattered over the distant plain.

"Nowhere are they so near," he said, lying on his back, gazing upward. "Are they really the same stars that I saw far away in my grinding captivity?"

"Are they the same I saw, looking up from my garden of the gods?" I replied, and gently he warned me not to blaspheme.

"But you are going to do something worse

than to blaspheme by word of mouth," said he. "Ah, my friend, saver of my life and noble as you are, on Mount Zion you will scent the incense burnt to Jupiter—on this the sacred rock of David. There you will revel with your friends, ignorant of God."

"If any man wishes to burn incense to Jupiter, let him burn it," said I. "It is no more than burning a handful of straw to an undiscovered star, a myth. If any one wishes to burn incense to your David——"

"You must not say that. David was a sacred king, but we offer sacrifice to the Lord alone."

"What sort of sacrifice?"

"Blood upon the altar."

"But does not Rome prevent the shedding of blood for religious rites?"

"Not the blood of animals. We offer up bullocks and sheep."

"Does your God so desire the blood of his dumb creatures?"

"You cannot understand," he said. "Wait until you have read the Scriptures."

"The Scriptures may teach me much," I admitted, "but I cannot see how I shall be taught to believe that a god, all-powerful as you say yours is, should desire to be propitiated with the smoke of burnt blood. In the arena there is death, but it is the death of

bravery, of combat, of manliness; and besides, it affords amusement to thousands, and not alone to a few priests." He turned over from me and would not talk, and I lay there, gazing at the stars until I sank into sleep, to dream of Vloden.

We had paid the Arab for the privilege of walking on the road, but meals were extra, and for food he charged us outrageously. One would have thought that the entire country was afflicted with a famine and that he held all of the food.

Here and there were neglected tombs, crumbling beneath the continuous touch of time. Among them prowled fierce-looking dogs. Milthias said that in these wildernesses of the dead lived outlaws and robbers.

"Then I can see a future asylum for our genial host, the Arab," said I; and the fellow's sharp ears caught my words.

"You are like the rest of your race," he replied. "You have no sympathy for the weak and defenseless."

After this he charged us more for food. I told Milthias that I would submit to one more advance in price and then I would appeal to my sword. Again the Arab overheard me, and, turning upon me a sad countenance, he asked if I would commit murder. I replied

that under certain conditions I would, most cheerfully; and he must have believed me, for he invited us to take our evening meal with him. We did so, and no gentleman in Rome could have dispensed his favors with a kindlier show of hospitality. With commanding grace he broke bread for us and poured for us the sweetest milk, and when hunger had been satisfied he urged us to eat more, begging us not to despise his humble fare.

"You see now, my children," he said as Milthias and I stretched ourselves on the ground, "that I have a soft and generous heart. Into my nature these qualities were instilled by my father, who is an old and afflicted man. I am striving in my weak way to make him comfortable in Jerusalem, but he longs to return to Alexandria, the city of his birth, but I am not able to maintain him there at present, though I shall as soon, O my good children, as I can. Will you not therefore help me? Will you not of your rich store donate to so worthy a purpose?"

So he robbed us again, or at least he robbed me of what little I had, but Milthias held out against him, giving him so little that he returned it with a sigh. When he had gone to his own bed, beyond hearing of us, Milthias said to me: "Eradmus, in many things you are strong, but in some others you are like a

child. Is it possible that the Arab could hide from you so plain a villainy?"

"When I am not ready to fight a man I am in a position to be robbed," I answered. His change of tone was so complete that I did not know but that it might be a change of nature."

"The leopard that cannot change his spots is as changeable of nature as the Arab," Milthias replied. "Even his hospitality is theft. He cannot be honest; and yet he may live in the city of honesty and honor. Ah, and within those sacred walls you will meet men of integrity—the chosen of the Lord."

The nearer we drew unto the city which he really believed was built by inspired hands, the more fervent he became. Even a bird flying from one dwarfed olive tree to another, awoke his awe, his interest, as if it were the especial sparrow which could not fall without the notice of his Deity. "But the doves that are sacrificed at the altar?" said I, when he had again reminded me of the divine care taken of the birds. "Are they not as sacred as the sparrow? Have you not told me about a dove that was sent forth during a time of great flood to search for dry land? And now, to atone for your sins, you sacrifice the dove. In what way did your people so sin as to be under such constant contribution of blood?"

But as he had ever done, he told me that I

did not understand. How could I enter into the atmosphere of his belief and his reverence? With alien eyes I looked upon the plains and upon these valleys green with verdure here and there. A pool which to him was holy and which, in the ages past, would have healed the sick and restored sight to the blind, was no more to me than a muddy pond in Italy where geese were wont to swim. I said that I should like to admire the great men of his country, but that history gave unto me no cause, since it was all so mixed with the erring fervor of religion.

"Does not your history teach you that the founders of your city of Rome were suckled by a she-wolf, and do you not believe it?" he said in a sad voice, halting for a moment to gaze at an ancient and rough-hewed rock, planted in the ground.

"History may tell me so, and yet will I not believe it. And even should I deem it true, would it be seemly then for me to revere all wolves?"

He strode on without replying, looking about for more objects to venerate; and when we had come near a great heap of stones, he gathered up a stone and hurled it upon the pile. I asked him why he did it, and moodily he said that I could not comprehend the spirit with which it had been done; and believing

that there must lie here some enemy of his race, I also cast a stone to show that I took sides with him, even though the enemy might have been a Roman.

Some time before coming within sight of the city we met a caravan, and ours halted while the two leaders conversed in Greek. Though I could get no intelligible meaning out of their talk, I saw by their gestures that it did not alone concern the price of commodities in the market. Milthias, who understood, was much interested, and when again we had set on, he said that they had been speaking about a famous robber named Barabbas, who, though he pretended to rise in sedition solely against Roman authority, robbed caravans and helped himself to goods wherever he could lay hands upon them. The Arab dragged his pace to suffer me to overtake him, and when I had, he said: "If we should soon come upon any of the Roman troops, will you not beg of them to give me safe conduct to the city? I am much in fear of a famous robber, Barabbas."

With a wink at Milthias, I replied: "That will not be necessary. The robber you mention is a friend of mine, and although he hates the Romans in general, he is beholden to me for saving his life several years gone by, not far from Jericho."

On this the sacred ground of the world and

of all time, it was but natural that Milthias should frown upon so evident a lie. He clutched my arm and looked into my face, but I winked him into keeping silent. I mentioned Jericho because it was one of the few towns the names of which I could command, and I did not know that this city lay within the territory of the famous robber's exploits, but I was soon relieved of all doubt by the Arab, who said in surprise: "Then you are not approaching Jerusalem for the first time? I thought that you said you were a stranger."

"I have never been in the city of Jerusalem, but was once stationed in Jericho."

Again Milthias clutched my arm, but I whispered him to remain quiet. "I should like to meet Barabbas again," I continued, observing by the Arab's countenance, now turned toward me, that he had begun to give to me not only his kindest regard but his affections.

"Remember, my son, that I spread a banquet for you," he said, beaming upon me with tenderness. Ah, how strange it is that those most given to falsehood are sometimes the most credulous. The Arab believed me. And Milthias, now falling into the humor of the joke, said that Barabbas would sometimes attack a caravan beneath the very walls of a city.

"The bolder the safer," said I.

"My sons," said the Arab, "within the midst of yonder grove is a well of living water. There shall we halt and feast."

Sons long abroad and just returned to a loving father could not have been served with more of solicitous grace. The Arab brought forth sweets of most delicious flavor, and with them a skin of wine which, when poured, perfumed the air as if those glowing drops had been distilled from the very scent of the vine in bloom. And while the meal was still in progress the Arab returned to me the money which I had contributed toward the comfort of his father. When, with a show of hesitation, I held back my hand from taking it, he urged me not to rob myself for one whom age and decrepitude had placed beyond all earthly aid.

When we came within sight of the city, Milthias smote his breast and uttered a poetic lamentation. On the spurs of the hills it sat, holding for him all true history, but to me it was but a Roman garrison. Its towers gleamed in the slanting sun, and from it arose a white heat, a dazzle; but I could descry no triumphal arches beneath which had marched home the conquerors of the world. I wondered why a city had been built there at all, in that almost sterile place. There were green valleys, but they were small and few. The

grain fields were remote, and provisions, for the most part, had to be brought long distances on camels. How could this place ever have withstood a siege by starvation? No Roman, with his practical mind, would have laid out a city on a spot so destitute of all advantages save one, the firmness of foundation. I was disappointed, but Milthias continued to murmur his admiration. Ah, how could I blame him? For him the world was within those walls, just as the world of my heart was surrounded with logs and mud in Britain.

Over every hill, and rising up as if out of the ground, were caravans wending toward the gates. The Arab had been mounted that he might better scan the country, but now, realizing that there was no cause for uneasiness, he dismounted and came back to me with insolent repentance in his manner and his looks.

"We have not met your friend," he said.

"Possibly he did not know that I was coming."

"Did you observe that I held a moment's converse with a man, just now, a man coming from the city?"

I had not observed it, but did not dispute him. "He brought me news," said the Arab.

"Not the news that my friend has been taken, I hope."

His sharp eyes stabbed at me as he replied: "No. But the news that my father is much better. He will now be able to stand the journey to Alexandria. Would you be so kind, therefore, as to return the donation so generously given before?"

"I am afraid that it might tempt him to make trial of the journey and that he might die on the road."

"You have eaten of my food and have drunk of my wine."

"And am willing to recommend your goods to customers."

"No, not that, but you are willing to rob me."

Here Milthias interposed, requesting him, in a kindly way, to observe more care; but it does not seem to be given to the Arabian character to distinguish the difference between kindliness and timidity. So he replied thus to Milthias: "When I stand in need of your counsel I will call upon you. Soldier, are you going to return my father's money or shall I tell him that you are a robber?"

"Tell him that I am a robber in league with Barabbas."

"I have come now to believe that you know him not."

"Yes, you come into safety and bold beliefs at the same time."

"Shall I be forced to raise a cry that you have robbed me?"

"You may raise one cry, but not two. After the first one you might wonder what had become of your head; and my friends in the citadel, yonder, might say, 'Why did you bring us that lump of desert sand? Ah, it is the head of an Arab.' Would it look well of me to go through the streets of this sacred city carrying such a burden?"

"I shall remember you."

"And commend me to your father."

He mounted his camel, paying no further attention to me, and when, just before entering the gate, I waved him a farewell, he shut his eyes that he might not see me.

It was good to behold again a Roman soldier, in arms and on duty; and at the gate I seized the sentinels by their willing hands and pressed them hard. Few were the words we spoke, for well these men could understand. And now, in the crowded, narrow streets, there were tides of eager life, not such as one might view in Rome, broad and free, but pinched and anxious with care and the constant strife of trade. The Jews themselves were quiet, the most of them sad with the

dignity of suppressed humiliation, but one who had studied men could see that in their breasts there was a mastered rage, biding the time of their deliverance from the stranger and the pagan. Faith in the coming of some miracle lent them strength and graced them with a sort of majesty. One feature of their intercourse, and which I could not but observe, was the respect they paid to age. There was no need to cry, "Make way for this old man." Way was already made. All eyes seemed at once to catch revered sight of a gray beard. Age was wisdom. Wisdom was closely akin to the prophets, and the prophets promised deliverance. Arabs, Greeks, men from the Nile were shouting, quarreling and sometimes fighting as one blocked the way of the other, but the Jews were silent. The Arabs laughed, the Greeks were sometimes jolly and the men from the Nile might sing a song, but the Jews were silent.

Now I had to hasten to keep pace with Milthias. And he, too, was silent. He had been gone a long time, and in the throng he met no acquaintance. Though eager to reach his home, he lingered for a moment now and then, at a landmark of his faith, a pillar, a tablet, to mutter and to muse. After a long time, halting before turning into another street, he said to me: "Eradmus, our ways

part here; there lies your path, toward the Tower of Antonia. Mine lies—homeward. My father's house is not far from here," and now he was seized with a trembling. "It is not given to me to know whether they are all alive and well, my father, mother and sister, but always in my heart there has been a prayer for them. Eradmus, though no Roman has ever crossed our threshold, yet out of gratitude you shall be welcome there. And may I make a request of you?"

"Speak it, Milthias."

"I fear that you will laugh at me. You have made light of my faith, of my love for God. I took it in good part, for I have seen something of the world. But my parents and my sister have not seen the world, though my father is a learned man. Will you give unto their faith the respect of silence?"

"I will say nothing that you do not wish me to say."

"And if my father should say that the Romans worship idols, still will you hold your peace?"

"Yes, unless it is to agree with him. The Romans do worship idols. All worship, whether of the visible or the invisible, is of idols."

He smiled upon me compassionately, as one smiles upon pitiable ignorance; but into his

eyes there came a look of sudden tenderness, for he must have thought of the night, in the thicket, when I had sworn to Vloden that I would not go and leave him; and I believe that he would have embraced me had he not feared the censure of the Jews who were now wagging their beards, to see us talking so closely together. I left him, telling him that I hoped to see him again soon, and turned in the direction of the Temple, built by Solomon. The evening was come. The sun was setting. Suddenly there came the loud peal of trumpets, and from the Temple arose a cloud of smoke. It was the hour of sacrifice, of prayer that was supposed to ascend unto heaven in the smoke from the blood of animals, a service conducted both night and morning. Now, as I looked downward upon the city, gazing along the steep streets that looked like trenches cut in rock, it seemed that the whole of the inhabitants had been suddenly lifted from the ground to the tops of the houses, all with their eyes turned toward the Temple. It was impressive, speaking as it did of a devoted state of the human mind, but solemn as it was, with its almost breathless stillness, it was in the eye of a soldier more than half contemptible. To one born and reared in Rome, there was really no magnificent spectacle away from his city, and in these low

houses of whitish rock there was neither grandeur nor grace. On further up was the Temple, originally built by King Solomon, but restored and made grander by Herod the Great, I had learned from Milthias; and just north of this was the Tower of Antonia, the Roman Citadel, frowning with its square and seemingly impregnable walls. As may be known of me by this time, I had no reverence for a building dedicated to ignorance and fanaticism, but upon this Temple, this pile of marble, no one could look without an emotion of wonder and of pleasure. Ah, and now I was on ground sacred also to me, for here great Pompey had taught the Jews that Roman skill and valor could overcome a wild religious zeal. Prophecies are but words written in the dust, to be blown away; appeals to the god of battle are but as breaths sighed out in the darkness of a stormy night. All are vain against the strength and the precision of the legions of Rome, a human machine organized by the mind of man. Thus I mused as onward I went, now hastening to meet my friends. At the gate of the fortress the sentinel knew me. On the wall above my name was spoken. There was no surprise, no word louder than an ordinary tone. All things that came into the soldier's life came without marvel, his victories, his defeats, his

escapes. Over the stones of the courtyard I strode, at home again beneath the eagles; and I entered a mess-room and there were Limprosus and Sempre, in the midst of an argument. Silently they looked at me, still catching at each other's phrases, loth to leave off. They did not seem to realize that I had come back to them.

CHAPTER XIV

At the House of a Friend

AS WELL might they have expected a return of one from the dead; but there was no outspoken astonishment. They embraced me with the strength of soldiers, and each one, fearing that he might forget the point he wished to make, turned again to argument. "But I have seen him," said Limprosus. "I have heard him speak, and if he has not the words of all wisdom, then never was wisdom known to man."

"He may have much wisdom, but you have called him a god," Sempre replied. "And I have seen you pay heed to idlers who talk as carelessly as the wind lists; and these idlers say that he heals the sick and restores sight to the blind. If you do not believe them, why do you give to them the ear of encouragement?"

"I have not said that I do not believe them," Limprosus made haste to reply, uttering his words in a deep and solemn voice.

"But will you say to me now that you *do* believe them?" Sempre insisted; and I looked

at Limprosus, expecting to see his countenance deny sooner than he could with words the imputation that he had parted company with his reason. But his countenance underwent no change, except to become graver, and we waited in silence for him to speak.

"I will say to you now that I do not disbelieve them. Do you remember an old blind man that sat about the castle gate? We found him when we came, and I was told that such had been his daily custom for many years. Not long ago his son went down to the harvest, in the fields that lie out toward Jericho. One day he returned in haste, and, mounting his father on an ass, led him out into the country. And when the old man returned, he could see. I talked to him. I saw him no longer ago than yesterday—and he was at work, and I questioned him closely, so that I might not misunderstand his words; and he said that the god-man had healed him."

"A good physician," said Sempre.

"But he employed no medicines. He spoke —told him that he could see and instantly he could see. Was not that a miracle?"

"A miracle of credulity. But you have seen this man that calls himself the son of a god?"

"No, he does not call himself the son of a god, but the Son of God."

"Very well. You simply emphasize the absence of a difference. This, however, is what I wish to say: You saw him and you heard him speak, but did you see him speak vision into the eyes of the blind, hearing into the ears of the deaf, strength into the legs of the cripple? Or did you listen, blunting your reason, believing him when he told of the wonderful things that he had performed?"

"He tells of nothing that he has done. But did I see him with my own eyes do any of the things that are attributed to him? No, I did not. A small squadron of us were returning from a village where there had been a riot. Along in the afternoon we halted in a small town to refresh ourselves and our horses. Near a public fountain were gathered a number of people, Jews and Greeks, Arabs—men of all the countries hereabout. The gathering was orderly and the centurion paid no attention, but while the horses were resting I walked toward the assembly, looking for some sort of diversion; and the moment I came within hearing of the One who was speaking I felt my heart beat quicker, with the sound of his voice, even before I understood his quiet words. I saw that he was a Jew, and I did not know but that he might cease to talk when I came near, but he did not, nor did he cast upon me a silent reproach

for my coming. In truth, he looked upon me with the kindliest eyes I have ever seen. Some of the people were in tears. Others seemed to be angry, and I observed that these latter were Jews above the ordinary station in life. One of them, a man that wore rich raiment and his black beard flowing down upon his breast, spoke to me.

"'Why is it,' said he, 'that this man who insults every Jew by calling himself the King of the Jews—why is it that he is permitted to preach such sedition against Tiberius, and that, too, within the hearing of the soldiers of the empire?'

"'I have heard him preach no sedition,' I answered, 'but if you will not seek to draw my attention from him I may hear what he has to say.' He went away muttering, and I gave my willing ear to the man whose name they say is Jesus. I have always believed that true wisdom was simple. I could never accept a man as being great because he was girdled about with gold. This man——"

"But what did he say that was so simple and so wise?" Sempre broke in, impatiently. "Surely you can remember something. I am not trying to confuse you. I desire to know."

"Sempre, it seems that I felt rather than heard what he said. Indeed, the most of what he uttered was a wisdom which not without

much marring can be respoken. That which to Socrates was misty and uncertain, was to this man clear as day. But we are showing but little respect to our friend. And now, Eradmus, if we have not too far offended you with our seeming carelessness of your return, tell us your story."

"Yes," said Sempre, "from the time you were carried away; but first let me give our brief recital. We received no message of the massacre. Night came, and when the detachment did not return, we were marshaled forth, through the dark. And then, by the dull torches, we beheld a bloody sight, there in the new road, in the forest. Carefully the mutilated bodies were counted, and when we did not find you among them, we thought that you must have escaped; but when the days passed and you did not return, we thought that you were taken and killed or that you had been devoured by the wolves. There was talk of a march against the Britons, but soon there came an order for our withdrawal from the island. Now you may tell your story."

I told it, in as few words as I could, with guarded mention of Vloden. Like children they listened, with never an interruption until I mentioned the name of Milthias. For a long time I held his name for a surprise, referring to him not even as a Jew, but as my fellow

slave; and when at last I said that he was a Jew and that his name was Milthias, Limprosus showed more of surprise than I supposed him capable of feeling. His countenance lighted with pleasure, and he said: "I am thankful that you saved him. Of course he came with you to Jerusalem? You told him that you were acquainted with me? Then he will soon be here, in this room; and when I talk to him about the man Jesus, he will understand."

We sat up that night as long as we were permitted to, stealing even a moment or two that we might talk. When we had lain down in the dark, Sempre, who was near me, waited until he thought Limprosus was asleep and then he said, in a tone but little above a whisper, lest the sentry making his rounds should hear: "They call this the land of wisdom, but it is the country of fanaticism, of narrowness and of greed." He waited, and now assured that Limprosus was not awake, he added: "I believe that the old man is losing his mind. Whenever he hears anything that he cannot understand, he believes it to be wisdom. So much has the foolish study of Plato done for him. He is no longer a good soldier. He has begun to talk about feeling and heart. This is the beginning of decay. Even in an argument he is more patient than he was, and

this means the gradual death of spirit. Here comes a man, without an army, without followers except the lowly and the ignorant, and calls himself a king. It should provoke a smile of pity, if anything at all. Limprosus listens, cannot tell what the man said, but half believes in his claim. You remember the woman that broke my brother's pride and caused him to fall upon his sword? Well, she is here, living no one knows how, no longer fit to drive a chariot. Limprosus is almost in the humor to forgive her. Twice she has come to see him. He was surprised to find that I knew her. When I told him that my brother was the son of the wine merchant and that she had caused his death, he said nothing. It made no impression on him. In his eyes she stood forgiven. The old man is losing his mind. She tells him that she loves him and he believes her. Could there be better proof that his faculties are ebbing?"

It was still early in the forenoon of the following day when word was brought to Limprosus and to me that Milthias was without the gate. Our centurion gave permission for him to enter. The meeting of these old friends was quiet. They embraced, and in the eyes of the Jew there were tears, but Limprosus, though losing his faculties, was still a

soldier. Milthias put his hand on my shoulder and said:

"I owe my life here."

"I have thanked him," spoke Limprosus. Sempre was introduced and he bowed with coldness. He hated all Jews. They were the enemies of his country. But after a time, remembering that Milthias and I had suffered together, this Roman youth looked with less of chilliness upon my friend. On the couches we sat and were soon at ease, one with another, but Milthias could not conceal his sadness. It was here that his people had fought to maintain the honor and the independence of the Jewish nation. On those stone slabs, which now served for couches, their blood had been shed. Pompey and Herod came thundering down from the north. The Jews died bravely, some of them at least. There was naught else to do. Fate had called for their blood.

Before long, however, Limprosus began to talk of his wise man. Sempre arose and walked away. I was glad that there was now to be no argument. Here were two men who were likely to agree. I would hold my peace. But soon I saw that there was to be no agreement. Milthias opposed the claims of the philosopher. He said that such a man could not be the king of the Jews Where was his

power? How was he to deliver Judea? How was he to prove that he was a descendant of David? "My father saw him in Bethany," said Milthias. "He is an impostor, a false prophet, and in this land there have been many of them. Centuries have passed since Israel had a true prophet. The true ones have always been venerable men, learned in the laws of our fathers; but this man would destroy the very law of Moses."

"Wait until you have heard him," said Limprosus.

"But I tell you that my father has seen him and has heard him. Is not that sufficient?"

"No, not sufficient. Every man must see and hear for himself. But tell me, my friend, did you not say that your great book promised to your people a Son of God?"

"Yes, but the son of all power will not be as a beggar upon his own earth. He would not suffer insults at the hands of invaders. At his command the stones themselves would rise up as soldiers, armed to fight his battles. It is strange, Limprosus, that a Roman soldier should be so ready to believe. There are two minds that believe with singular readiness - the mind that is ignorant and the mind that is cultivated. One is too weak to defend itself against assertion, and the other, having become spiritualized, is sometimes ready to

accept the unreasonable and the absurd. Of what use to Judea would be a pauper king? Suppose that he should be a wise man, a philosopher. Wisdom does not necessarily inherit a scepter, nor is philosophy the fulfillment of prophecy. God has promised a king, to rule over the Jews, to make them all-powerful throughout the world. When he appears, the gates of Rome cannot prevail against him. But come, let me conduct you to my father's house, where we may eat of the bread that he blesses for us. Come, Eradmus, he is anxious to see you."

Leave was granted us and we accompanied Milthias, but not before I had been provided with new raiment. After bathing and arraying myself afresh in the habiliments of my calling, how new I felt! The air was pleasant. From afar off came the perfume of flowers. After all, the neighborhood was not such a desert. From the height which we were now slowly descending, I could see far out over the country. Here and there were cool, green and inviting valleys. But the scene did not remind one of Rome, the center of the world—of villas, one of which was as rich as a principality.

Milthias was bright and cheerful. He said that during the evening and the most of the night, his father's house had been a house of

prayer. There assembled the fathers of families, with tears glistening on their white beards. His father was loved and honored of all.

The house was plain, but of goodly size, the dwelling place of a successful man, but there was no attempt at display, no ceremony. We were met and made to feel that we were welcome. The father was not very old, but looked venerable. The mother was a lovable, tender woman, with a voice as sweet as an evening hymn. And who was this shy young woman, whose black eyes were so large and so bright? It was the sister, Amana. The father's name was Leboac. The mother was Lamela, daughter of a wise man who had stood high among the people. Milthias had told my story, and he had not omitted to mention Vloden; and that name, now uttered by Amana, the beautiful girl, thrilled me, made my heart stand motionless and then beat wildly.

"Tell me about her," said the girl. The mother, the father and Limprosus were now talking. The girl was granting her countenance and her ears to me. Not knowing how much of my heart she might be able to guess from what Milthias had told her, I was at something of a loss, but soon she enlightened me with the knowledge that the princess was

enamored of me and that I humored her to win my liberty. Now it was easier, and I talked to her a long time. Her manner was free, her voice warm and cordial, and yet there was a restraint which came not alone from the fact that we had met for the first time. I could not discover by word or tone that she was hiding any part of her nature from me. Her shyness vanished and she was frank and outspoken, and yet I felt that there was a mountain between us. It was not alone that Rome held Judea in bondage and that I was a Roman. It was something that meant more to her than this. It was that I did not acknowledge her God. As I say, nothing had been said, and yet I knew. She asked me many questions concerning Rome and my early life, and she was moved with pity when I made her feel how cold it had been. She could not understand why mothers and fathers did not love their children except——. Here she broke off suddenly and her face grew scarlet. I urged her to continue, but still she hesitated. I told her that I was glad of her confusion, that nothing the like of it in beauty had I seen since Vloden stood glowing before me. "For this sight I am indebted to a cause and I should like to know what that cause is," said I. "You need not be afraid of offending me. You can see no reason why

parents do not love their children except – what?"

"Except that they know not God," she said. I could have told her that in Rome there was many a beautiful love, of parents for children and of children for parents; I could have said what I believed, that love was a temperament and not a religion; but I was under promise to Milthias not to dispute with her, though how was it possible to talk to these people and ignore their belief?

She was surprised that I spoke Hebrew so well, though she knew that her brother was a good teacher; and then she lamented that her language was slowly dying. She said that in its original purity it was now rarely heard, except among members of the older families. The Greek and the Latin were driving it from the streets, from the market places; but it was still the language of devout prayer. From Milthias I had heard time and again the Jewish story of the world's creation, of the garden where man was commanded not to eat of a fruit and then so tempted that he did eat, but I requested her to tell it me. She told it as if she believed it, as if her eyes had seen the flaming sword that kept man from entering the garden again. Yet she was an educated girl, spoke Greek and could read Latin. But for all this she was ignorant of the most im-

portant thing that man is given to know—that he is ignorant of the origin of things. I could not see wherein her forefathers were so different from mine. Both owned slaves, and for the purposes of their religion they offered up human beings. The main point was that her God was not represented by stone, brass or gold; and yet, from what I had been able to gather, constant watch had to be maintained to keep them from worshiping idols. Milthias acknowledged that a great man, named Aaron, had made a calf out of gold and that the people wanted to worship it, even though some of them had seen the real God and knew that he must be still alive. After a time she asked me what I thought of the city of Jerusalem, and frankly I told her that compared with Rome it was mean.

"Your people do not seem to know how to make a place beautiful," said I. "You have had great soldiers, but I see no evidence in marble or bronze that they have lived. Your city has no statues in the public places, so far as I have seen, though I confess that I have been over but a small part of it. Surely among so many poets there must have been sculptors."

During this speech she looked at me with pity in her eyes. "It is contrary to our law to make graven images," she said.

"May I ask why, since they might be beautiful?"

"But it is wrong to worship beauty, to look upon it with an idolatrous eye; and that is what the people might do. The lawmakers were wise."

I did not wish to pursue this subject; but I liked to hear her talk, her voice was so soft and sweet; so I inquired about her school. She told me of her studies, but soon we were back among the prophets, for they were the pillars of all learning. I knew that the inner life of the city was warm and affectionate, and I talked to her about her home, of her parents and of her brother; and when I described our slavery among the Britons, her eyes glowed. She said that it was noble of me not to leave Milthias there in those cruel wilds; and as I looked upon her I counted him fortunate in the love of such a sister. Now we joined the others, having withdrawn a little apart from them; and I was pleased, for Milthias was smiling and Limprosus was in good humor. Leboac was a learned man. He had not halted with mastering the traditions and the narrow history of his country, but was able to meet Limprosus on the familiar ground of Greek philosophy. He had spent much time at Alexandria, where men discourse upon many things; and I wondered why these wise

men had not devised some weapon with which they might go forth and exterminate the Romans; but it seems that wisdom contents itself largely with the knowledge that it *is* wise.

Lamela was interested in the talk, for, companion of her husband, she kept genial pace with him, reading the books that he read; but it was not to be expected that she should acquire a judgment so deep. They all of them were too learned for me. Looking back, I regret the waste of these, the opportunities that were thrown in my way, for had I seized upon them with thankfulness, I should now tell my story with more of smoothness and of grace. But I was ignorant, unable to look forward and to see the coming of a time when words should be counted for more, when spoken with sincerity, than all the swords that ever flashed in the sun.

CHAPTER XV

He Came Like a Dark Shadow

I MADE free to visit this family as unrestrainedly as my garrison life would permit. With them all I was on terms of friendship. I was in the midst of them of a morning, of an evening, when bread was broken. I stood upon the housetop with them, the girl beside me, and gazed at the cloud of smoke arising from the bosom of the temple. I was with them in the hallway of the fountain when they drew together with affection to sing their hymns or to read the book of the prophets. I heard their prayers, their laughter, their words of love, one to another. I knew that they looked upon me not only with exceeding kindness, but in gratitude. And still I was compelled always to feel and to know that between us there lay a colder sea than that which in winter lapped the icy shores between Gaul and Britain. Among the scholars of all countries there seems to be a brotherhood. They meet upon ground sacred not alone to sects but to the human mind.

Between Limprosus and Leboac there was close sympathy. In a way their minds were attuned as two strings, adjusted by a correct ear. But between them, too, there was that cold gulf. Men who talk much together must strike differences, or with constant and expected agreements they grow weary of one another. Limprosus and Leboac found their differences every time they met, in the interpretations of a Greek text, in the drama or in philosophy, though never was there an impatient word or an ungentle look. But in his heart Leboac was as a stranger. Not so with Limprosus. In his bosom there lived no secret prejudices of race or condition. In war he had shed man's blood, but in peace I believe that he had repented of it. I know that he strove to win the complete confidence, the unreserved friendship of the father of Milthias, and I know that he failed.

At this time there were stationed in Jerusalem not so many as a legion of Romans. It has been said that the roster did not show more than a thousand men. In all quarters of the world Rome's needs were urgent, but how unwise it was to keep so small a force in so important a city! I was not a soldier of much experience, nor was I learned enough in public affairs to be a man of much estimation, but I did not see how any man could shut his

eyes to the danger of an uprising of the people. Toward this end the smallness of the garrison was a temptation.

I understood that the Procurator, Pilate, was somewhat of a favorite at Rome. Limprosus said that he had at least been advanced beyond his deservings; but be that as it may, he could have had more troops had he petitioned for them. His official residence was at Caesarea, but he spent much of his time in Jerusalem, living while here in the magnificent palace of Herod the Great. You cannot judge well of the character or the temperament of a man when you see him in a chariot; and it was thus that I first saw Pilate, proceeding through a street well swept by a troop of horse. But the observation I had of him gave to me the impression that he was, if not a voluptuary, still a man given much to the table and to wine. There was no sort of demonstration as he passed along All was quiet, save for the clatter of the hoofs of the horses and the rumble of the chariot wheels. It is said that the leaders among the Jews avowed to him that their people would remain passive so long as they were suffered to observe the rites of their religious faith. This appeared to be true, but throughout the land there were occasional riots that sometimes threatened to broaden into an insurrection.

A man who had called himself the king of the Jews had been put to death and a number of his followers destroyed. Some of those who were suspected merely of sympathizing with him had suffered. The Jews believed that their Savior was to come, and that, too, at a time when he was most needed, when Judea was most humiliated. But they scoffed at all evidences of poverty and of weakness. David had been strong, and they worshiped strength. Milthias, while walking about the Tower grounds with Limprosus and with me, had said: "If the Jews permit a man to arise and to call himself a prophet in their name, they all of them lay themselves liable to the penalty of extermination. I tell you, Limprosus, that when the true king comes, he will need no proof from fishermen and paupers. He will wear a crown."

"It is true that all must know when a king shall come," Limprosus replied. "But it was not of a king nor of a man of visible power that I was considering. I have seen kings in plenty. I have seen them die with their impotent crowns on their heads. I was thinking of a man who might bring evidence of an actual, a living God."

"My dear friend," said Milthias, "such proof has always existed. You may say that it has not existed for you, that it has not been made

plain to you; but all that is required of you is to exercise your reason and to accept the truth. Down through the ages—down to *me* has come the word of the men who have seen God. We have the Scriptures. You have read them. What further evidence do you need?"

"Milthias, it is easy enough to convince a man if you begin with him in his cradle," Limprosus replied. "Yea, if you begin with the cradle of his race. Your race and my race did not share the same cradle."

"No," Milthias rejoined, "that is true; but they did not find it necessary to go to your cradle to convince you that the Nazarene Jesus is a representative of that God of whose existence you demand proof."

It seemed to me that to this there was no answer, but without hesitation Limprosus spoke: "If there be a God, he must be the God of wisdom. If this man Jesus possesses more wisdom than a Plato, he must be in close kinship with that God. You who have been crushed are looking for power. I who have crushed am looking for wisdom."

Ah, it seemed that for Limprosus there was nothing but argument. There was no one to agree with him. Of what avail was it to read books? Knowledge brings company, but disputatious company. Ignorance soon settles its

differences. The stronger rules. Ignorance is never in doubt as to whom to pay court.

One evening Limprosus and I were at the house of Leboac when there came a kinsman of the family. His name was Belthius. He lived near the shore of the Lake of Galilee. When he arrived we were sitting in the small courtyard, where the air was cooled by a fountain. In the soft light of the lamp he came like a great dark shadow. He was of powerful build. How fair a price he would have brought in the Temple of Castor! A legion of such men, well trained, would have been worth more to the Jews than all of their beliefs in prophets, of mysterious forces that were to set them free from bondage. He scowled at Limprosus and me, and Leboac, upon introducing us, made haste to explain that we were the friends of his son and had in the wilds of a far-off country saved his life. Belthius thanked us. In blood relationship he and Milthias were not close, but this stood for naught. These Jews claimed and rejoiced in kinship to a degree that would have been ridiculous in Rome, except where the lowly claim the distinction of being of the same blood as the great. Here, however, humiliation and the misfortunes of race brought them closer to one another's love.

When Leboac asked for tidings from the

country, Belthius answered that the land was much excited over the man Jesus. Whenever he made his appearance in a town the multitude became so great that it was hard for one to pass along the street. "But," Belthius added, bowing to Limprosus and to me, "with all respect to your friends and the power which they represent, I see no deliverance in mobs that spend themselves with gazing and with listening. But, Leboac, you yourself have seen him."

"Yes, while his fortunes, or perhaps his misfortunes, were as yet small," Leboac replied. "It should seem that the Procurator would have put him down before this. It is because, however, that our rulers reject him as their prince. If we should accept him it would mean rebellion and, of course, soon come to naught, with much suffering on the part of our people. But tell me, Belthius, are any men of note following him?"

"Some of them wear the raiment of good station, but for the most part his adherents are lowly. I heard one man say that they would arm themselves and go forth to fight, but that their master forbade all force."

"Then why does he invite followers?" Leboac spoke up. "Does he think that he can persuade the Romans to withdraw from

Judea? Will he by mere talk attempt to reëstablish the throne of David?"

Limprosus could not stand clear of an argument, though I touched him to keep him quiet. He said that perhaps the prophecies were wrongly interpreted. It might be that the Son of God would choose to come with persuasion rather than with the sword.

The eyes of Amana, the daughter of the household, were turned with a sort of pity upon my friend. How could a Roman speak thus? She seemed to feel ashamed for him. She gave to me a look which I felt meant that I should follow her. She arose and went over to the fountain where the water, in the light, looked like spouting wine. I followed her. What was it that she would say to me? I was soon enlightened.

"My brother Milthias is becoming restless," she said, turning her great dark eyes upon me. There was no pity in them for me. Sometimes they sparkled with mischief, but now they were aglow. I bowed, waiting for her to proceed. "He would again go forth in a ship to trade," she said, "and I wish you to persuade him to remain at home. My mother is deeply anxious, but father, as much as he loves my brother, does not seem to grasp the distress of his going away again. Alas, can our people think of nothing but to

trade? It was the eagerness to buy and to sell that took Israel's thoughts away from God, and then they were left to their enemies."

"Fair sister," I replied, "I should not like to see him go away, but as he is not in love with idleness, what is there left for him but trade? Your religion robs him of the arts. In Rome one may paint and carve, but here the finer feelings are imprisoned, serving an eternal sentence. If they find expression, it must be in prayer. An emotion addressed to an unseen deity is not of the noblest. Man's best thoughts must be addressed to man. A statue of a god is only great because it pleases the eye of man. Whether or not it delights a deity must be imagined. Let your brother go to Rome."

In her eyes there was no pity for me, but there was scorn. "You would have him become an idolater." She turned about and looked toward Limprosus, now in an argument with Belthius. "Your friend is ready to believe everything but the truth, and you are ready to believe nothing."

Just at this moment Limprosus called me, warning me that we must take our leave. But I took the time to apologize to the maiden. I told her that I had no intention of tainting her brother with idolatry, and that if I could I would persuade him to remain at

home. She thanked me with her eyes and with words that were as soft and as sweet as the murmur of the fountain.

Even after we had taken leave, Limprosus showed a disposition to linger, to have one more word with Belthius. Surely it was as Sempre had said. The old man was losing his mind, or, if not that, he was acquiring a mind that could be of no use to him.

CHAPTER XVI

On the Steps of the Ruined Portico

THE small garrison was wanting in cavalry, and frequently the infantry was mounted to perform special service. The school through which the most of us had gone enabled us to change without inconvenience from one branch of the service to another. This gave to me an opportunity to make excursions into the country. In parts of the territory of Judea, of Samaria and of Idumea, all under Pilate, the presence of troops was almost constantly demanded. Sometimes they were sent from one garrison and sometimes from another, to suit the occasion of nearness. On the morning after my latest visit to the house of Leboac, I was one of a small squadron ordered to make all possible haste to quell a riot out somewhere on the road to Jericho.

It was pleasant to be out in the country, astride a mettled horse. It was early when we cantered forth through the Jericho gate. The air was sweet with the dews of the night. As far as I could see, were camels bringing

their burdens into the city; and doubtless somewhere among the Arabs, shrewd masters of the humpbacked beasts, was that dutiful son who, by ceaseless industry, was striving to acquire money enough to send his aged father to Alexandria, but I was not likely to meet him on this road. I might, however, come upon Barabbas, and I mused that should I have the opportunity to talk to him, I would tell him of the caravan master who lived in such fear of him, and of the advantage I derived from having claimed him as my friend. The road was not a Roman road, smooth and straight wherever it could be made so, but was crooked and in places rough with stones. The rocks about which the way was compelled to wind were not removed for the reason that over them the prophets had passed; and to have broken them and taken the fragments away would, no doubt, have been regarded in the light of a sacrilege. I wished for Milthias, that he might point out the objects of interest. Not that they would have interested me, but that it would have given him pleasure. A picture of his sister arose in my mind. Again I could see her look of scorn. I would keep my word with her. I would urge Milthias not to return with his ship to barbarian waters; but if he should go he might touch upon Britain. He might see Vloden. Yes, I

would urge him not to go, but did I hope that he would not?

We scouted the country round about, passed through several villages, but nowhere came we upon a place that appeared to have been the scene of a late disturbance; but on the following day we saw numerous people crossing the fields and thronging the highways. There was a village not far distant, and the centurion, supposing that this was the meeting place, urged onward; and soon we came into the one street that led through the hamlet. Here the people were gathered in a great mass, but there was no sign of an uprising against authority. About halfway down the thoroughfare there was a widening, a sort of plaza, almost as broad as a small field. To this plaza the people were flocking. The centurion ordered them to make way. This they did without the slightest show of resistance. In the midst of the plaza there was a well, and near it a ruined porch, the crumbling portal of some ancient temple. On the steps of this ruin stood a man. He was delivering an oration. Close about him were gathered a small number of his more especial followers. We drew rein and waited, though not within easy hearing of the speaker; but all was quiet. There was not a sound except the low tones of his oration and the deep breathing of the

multitude. A space was cleared about our troop. Out from the throng, to the left of us, came a man who wore some sort of a badge to distinguish him. He alone of all whom I saw appeared to be excited. He saluted the centurion. "What is it you desire?" the centurion inquired.

"I would ask, sir, why this man, who calls himself the King of the Jews, is permitted to disturb the affairs of the community and to render it impossible to conduct the business of the day. I ask you to disperse this mob and to place that man under arrest."

"Who is he?"

"He is one Jesus and he calls himself the King of the Jews."

"What harm is he doing? I cannot understand him very well, but he seems to be preaching meekness, obedience and love, rather than sedition. Under the law of Rome are not you and all the rest granted the freedom of speech, and the right to exercise your religious functions? This man is holding some sort of religious service, for see, those that can best hear him are in tears. Hark you, whoever you are, you are causing, and are likely to cause, more trouble with your noisy complaint than he with his oration. See that you yourself observe better order."

When the man Jesus had ceased to speak

the crowd began to disperse, but he continued for a time to stand on the step of the porch, conversing with those who pressed forward to obtain a closer view of him. Slowly our troop moved forward, now in broken order, to water the horses at the well. It was then that I had a close view of the man. He looked in no way like a god, unless it were a god stricken with grief. About him there was not the bearing of one who would seek to be a king. He was of goodly height. His brown hair fell upon his shoulders. In everything he suggested gentleness and in nothing physical strength. He looked toward me and I saw that his eyes were tender, clear and soft. They called him a Jew, but his face was not characteristic of any race that I had ever seen. Surely no triumph had ever brought his prototype to Rome. The features of grief may not be handsome, but they are never devoid of a sort of nobleness, for they show character, without which no face may be strong enough to remain in our memory. I knew that much curiosity often discovers a fictitious interest. I knew that it required reason to separate notoriety from greatness. But about this man the idlest and most indifferent eye could have seen a strange force, a power in humility. A word from my commanding officer would, of course, have essayed me to cut him down.

Had he declared himself a king to resist the authority of Rome he would have been my enemy, but as I gazed upon him now he seemed the enemy of nothing that lived. Have you stood upon a hilltop when the glare of the day was gone and all the world was at peace? He was the embodiment of such a peace. When the music of a hymn has been hushed, have you heard a music sweeter than the softest sound? He was the essence of such a music. And yet I was a soldier, ready to shed his blood, yea, though he were the statue of the god of grief, come to life. But he was human, the most human of all humanity. I did not believe that he possessed miraculous power. Whence could come such a power, save from the gods? And they were myths. But the people—and many still lingered upon the scene—expected some wonderful demonstration. They were there to demand physical proof of a spiritual force. But it appeared to me that while many of them wished to be convinced, others were prepared to disbelieve in the man, no matter what he might do. The lovers of traditions are sometimes the enemies of those who would overturn them, even though it might be to reveal a truth. With many, the desire to believe is an evidence of the truth.

Near by stood an old man, a priest, consult-

ing a roll of the prophets and then anon scanning the face and the bearing of Jesus, to determine whether or not he were the one spoken of by the writer of the ancient book. After a time he shook his head and cried out: "False, false! He comes not as the promised one."

Sempre, who sat on his horse near me and nearer to the priest than I was, touched him with his spear and said: "He may be nothing that he claims to be, and yet is he not so false as yourself. You would stir up trouble, and if you do, let me assure you that my spear will single you out. Roll up your barbaric war songs and away with you."

He went his way, muttering and wagging his head. Suddenly there was a commotion about the stone steps. A cry arose that a miracle had been performed. I saw a woman throw her arms about a young man. I heard some one say that he had been possessed of devils and that Jesus had cast them out. He was doubtless insane, and something about Jesus, his quiet air and his low and commanding words, had spoken peace to the madman's troubled mind. But to me that was no miracle, other than the power of mind. How did they know that the youth was possessed of devils? No one saw the devils that were cast out of him. No one could prove that

devils existed; but the young man was cured of his mental distemper and the people shouted. Then appeared again the priest who had searched the roll of the prophets. "Beware of him," he cried. "He is under the authority of Beelzebub."

"Who in the name of Mars is he?" Sempre inquired, laughing. "But no matter whose authority he is under, the work seems to be good. Remember that if any trouble should arise, my first fling is at you."

We now proceeded on our return to Jerusalem. Crossing a wooded hill, to make shorter the road, we came upon a wretch hanging upon a cross, crucified under the law. We halted for a moment or two to look at him, it being for the most of us a novel sight. He was conscious, though we learned that he had already hung for two days upon the cross. He looked down upon us and begged us most piteously to dispatch him. "Why were you crucified?" the centurion inquired, and he answered that he had been accused and convicted of stealing, but that he was not guilty. "Take me down," he moaned, "and let me be your slave." He begged for water, but we passed on and left him.

"If he were a murderer he might have arisen to the dignity and the favor of having his head cut off," said Sempre, who rode

beside me. "If a man is going to be a criminal, how unwise to be a small one. It is, Eradmus, as we have often agreed. No power respects weakness. That is the reason the Jews can find no wisdom in the man Jesus. They construe his gentleness into lack of strength, but if there be strength in self-possession he is strong. I do not now wonder that Limprosus was impressed."

"I have heard that everywhere he makes more of an intellectual impression upon the Roman than on the Jew," I replied. "And I heard, though I do not recall who told me, that it makes no difference in what tongue he may speak, every one hears him or at least understands him in his own language. But do you remember what language he spoke in just now?"

"Greek," Sempre answered.

"No, that cannot be, for when his voice was high enough I understood his words, but I am almost a stranger to Greek."

"It is possible that he employed first one language and then another," said Sempre. "But it is not the command of many tongues that renders him impressive to me. It is his godlike calmness." And after a time, as if he were seriously thinking about this strange man, he added: "But none of his attributes can lead him to any good except to the set-

ting up of a school. I should think that Rome would be a better field for him. I do not believe he is a Jew. He has not the eager face of these people. Ah, I was wondering what notice the Roman authority will be compelled to take of his growing influence."

"What notice can be taken of him if his influence be not against the government?" I inquired, also musing deeply, for I was interested.

"But," said Sempre, "all movements that excite the people must in time come under the censure of authority. Being so gentle, he will perhaps desist when warned not to deliver his orations. I wish that Limprosus could have come with us. It is unfortunate that his age is withdrawing him from active duty. I have heard that he has been granted the liberty to quit the service whenever he shall be so inclined. It will please him when we deliver our reports of the strange man. There will, however, arise a difference in the views we take of him. One look and one hearing of him have brought you and me to the very limit of our faith in him. We know that he is but a man, since it is not given to one on earth to be more. But in his weakness, or rather in that condition of a decaying mind which grasps feebly about for some new and sustaining force, Limprosus will ascribe to him, more and more, a power beyond that of man. He

is looking for a god. He is striving to create for himself a soul, to inhabit his breast with a spirit that shall live after his body shall have turned to dust. This is an enfeeblement put upon him by Plato. Perhaps if his god-man can cast out devils which do not exist, he can cast off age which does exist. It may be that this is the hope of our old friend. It may be that he would be young again. He cannot, however, get such a hope from Plato. Not even the Jews, who believe that all things are possible with their God, find a promise that old age shall again become youth."

When we returned to the Tower of Antonia, Limprosus was not there. He was practically his own master now. He could come and go as he saw fit. The guards at the gate did not question him. He had drained the veins of many an enemy of Rome, and was venerated. Soon, however, he returned to the citadel, from a visit to the house of Leboac. The argument must have been spirited and he must, in consequence, have enjoyed himself, for his old eyes were aglow. When Sempre said that we had seen the god-man, the old soldier sat down on a stone couch and waited for an opinion. Sempre waited also, and I was silent. After a time Limprosus spoke.

"Tell me what you have been compelled to believe," said he.

"How do you know that we have been compelled to believe otherwise than that the strange man is simply strange?"

"Ah, you could not say that and look as you do. He has shown you that there is a power that does not belong to the sword."

"But," said Sempre, "he has not shown us that we ought to worship him."

"Ah, that would not be possible," replied Limprosus. "It is not given to you to worship wisdom; but he has had an influence. The sight of a Caesar would invite you to admire. The sight of this man inspires you to think, but what your thoughts are you cannot tell. That makes him all the more mysterious. I have again held discourse with Belthius. He has seen the strange man since the time when Eradmus and I were last together at the house of Leboac, and more than ever he is violent in condemnation of him. He says that if Pilate does not have him dealt with, a petition will be framed and taken to Tiberius. Rome has granted to the Jews the right to enjoy their religion, but here comes a man who, more than a Roman army, would overturn it. I told him that if this were a peaceful conquest, his religion ought to fall—being unable to meet wisdom with wisdom. Belthius did not deny to him a sort of power, but said that it was the power of a wizard and came from an

evil source. I asked him if Jesus had ever employed this power for bad purposes, and he could not answer me, except to swear that good or apparent good might at times be wrought out of the forces of Satan. Then he explained who Satan was or is, since he appears to be a living entity in the Jewish faith. He must have been created by the God of all, and yet he is the enemy of God. Once there was a mighty war and Satan was overthrown. Since then it does not seem that he has been able to muster an army, but he goes about doing mischief."

We talked until the lights were put out, and then for a long time I lay with the picture of the strange man in my mind.

CHAPTER XVII

He Comes in Potential Humility

SOME time elapsed before I saw Milthias again, but one morning when I had walked out to breathe the early air, I came upon him and his sister as they were passing out of the Temple. They had gone thither to attend the sacrifice and to worship, after the manner of their fathers. Amana wore a thick veil, but through its meshes her dark eyes were gleaming. I would have walked along with them, and Milthias appeared to be willing enough that I should, but the maiden drew off from me. I was a heathen and she was afraid of opinion. I bowed to her, telling her that I did not hold her action ill; and she blushed, the color of her cheeks showing like a sunrise through a mist. In her gentleness she spoke words of apology, but they were as censures softly uttered. I turned about and was leaving them, when Milthias called me. He said that his sister must hasten home, but that he and I would walk together. And this we did, behind her, in the direction of their house. I did not

feel free to cross the threshold at so early an hour, but Milthias urged that it was in keeping to enter at any time when invited. Amana was standing within the door. When I entered she was cordial. She begged that I would not think that she had been rude in her bearing toward me near the Temple. I told her that religion was a matter of opinion and that opinion must be respected. She spoke up that religion was a matter not of opinion but of principle, existing between man and God. How ready all of them were! How earnest! And it was their earnestness that rendered them so formidable. She said that I should break fast with them, and her manner changed. Suddenly all of their geniality and their kindness returned to them, and now I was not a pagan, but one who had saved the life of the son, the brother. When the meal had been served by the slaves of Leboac, a most solemn and prayerful ceremony, as if to eat were a sorrowful event rather than a cheerful necessity as in Rome, Milthias, Belthius and I repaired to the cool hallway that opened into the courtyard where the fountain was playing. Leboac had affairs that required his attention, and went forth into the busy marts of the city. The mother and the daughter were occupied with their household duties, for I observed that no matter how many slaves a Jewish family might

AMANA WAS STANDING WITHIN.

possess, certain obligations devolved upon the female members of the household. It was a Jewish woman's first care not to show accomplishments to her husband, but to prove to him her worth by keeping his home in order.

When we had seated ourselves Milthias turned to me and said: "I have been away on a short journey."

"To prepare your ship for sailing back into the waters of the barbarians?" I inquired, remembering what the sister had said, and mindful of the request that she had made of me.

"No, I have given up that resolve, if the notion ever hardened into one. I went on a mission aside from the demands of all trade. With my cousin Belthius I went into the country to see the man who calls himself the Messiah."

"The what?" I asked, for the name Messiah was new to me.

"The man who calls himself the Christ. We heard him preach to a great concourse of people; and he speaks well, with shrewdness and with music in his voice, but he is not the king of the Jews, neither is he in anywise a savior of man. And were it not for the encouragement that he receives from the aliens, he would ere this have withdrawn himself in shame and disappointment from the

public gaze. In this land there have been many false prophets, and some of them have spoken with a wiser tongue than this man possesses. If it be intended that he is to save the Jews, why is it that they are the slowest to accept him? If he be so wise, why is it that the ignorant more than all others comprehend his wisdom? Wisdom invites and welcomes wisdom. I have heard that some of our learned men have interpreted the Scriptures in his favor, but I cannot find them or learn their names. A certain part of this man's power lies in vague rumor. My father, as you must know, is a wise man, and he denounces him as an impostor. I have heard that some of the Romans, other than our friend Limprosus, have acknowledged that this Jesus is more than a common man, more, indeed, than an uncommon man. If this be true, it is sympathy with him in order to humiliate us. But is it true? I wish to learn. Do you know of any soldiers that have been impressed by him—aside from Limprosus?"

"Yes, two," I answered. "Sempre and myself."

He looked at me as if I had smote him on the cheek. And then he bowed his head. But the eyes of Belthius were fixed upon me. He said nothing. He arose and slowly walked away, leaving me alone with Milthias.

It was some time before my friend raised his eyes, and when he did there was in them an expression of sorrow. I said to him that he had asked for truth, that I had given it to him and had pained him. "It were better to worship your idols," he said. "It were better to burn incense to Jupiter, for that could not hurt the true cause of God; and He in his own time could teach the error of it."

"But how can the simple acknowledgment that this man is a man of wisdom hurt any true cause?"

"By giving countenance to a bad cause," he answered. Suddenly his countenance changed. "But how is it, Eradmus, that you who have so often avowed your own ignorance of all learning—how is it that you are so ready to pronounce upon wisdom?"

"Perhaps it is the newness of having heard it for the first time that makes it so impressive."

"But what did this man say that so convinced you that he is a man out of the ordinary?"

It was now my time to hang my head, for I could not recall what the man Jesus had said. "It may not have been his words but his appearance," said I, his sorrowful countenance fresh in my mind.

Milthias shook his head. "It is to humiliate

the Jews," he spoke. "If our rulers were to embrace him as their leader—if they should fall at his feet, you Romans would fall upon him with the sword. I have read to you, out of the book, wisdom directly from Jehovah himself, and yet you would not believe. You said that to believe required an education in our faith. Who educated you to believe in this Nazarene?"

"My own eye. But with you and with me the word and the act of belief are of different meaning. To you, to believe is necessarily to worship. I do not worship this man. I believe that he is a good man. Can there be any crime in that?"

"But do you believe him when he says that he can raise the dead?"

"I have not heard him say that."

"But do you believe it possible for him to perform such a miracle?"

"No more than I believe that your invisible God can do or does do such a thing."

"Take care, Eradmus, you blaspheme. You would insult the All-powerful, and in this house. Take care."

He was becoming ridiculous, and I would have told him so but that I had for him a strong and abiding friendship.

"I do not desire to utter a word that might possibly bring distress upon your house," said

I. "But in a way you have challenged me to defend myself. To do so I must employ the only weapon within reach—the weapon of reason. You persist in misunderstanding me. You seek to make it appear that I believe this man to be immortal, when firmly I tell you that I do not. Again must I remind you that Julius Caesar did not have faith in the existence of things immortal. You must agree that Julius Caesar was the greatest man that has ever lived."

"I do not believe that," he replied. "Moses was a greater man than Julius Caesar, and if this man Jesus were the man that had been promised to us, he would come with the power of Moses—a king."

"Milthias," said I, arising to take my leave of him, "I am a man of the world, a soldier. You have sailed about the world, but you have never been able to sail out beyond your creed. The Greek slave and the slave from barbarian lands may be set free, but the slave to Jewish tradition must be a slave for all time."

He went with me to the door, but we parted in silence.

It was not long before it was noised about that the man Jesus was expected to appear in the city. He had preached in the Temple, it was said, but no one seemed to remember when. It was natural that Pilate, who was in

Jerusalem at the time, should feel anxious. So he sent out scouting parties to investigate the manner of the prophet's coming, whether it were as a religious entry or in the nature of a rebellious force. Word was brought that the philosopher was coming without any sort of demonstration, that he had been seen walking with a few followers, in the dust of the road. Some of the leaders among the Jews, however, requested that he should not be permitted to enter the gates. This order was denied them; but with all of the quiet of the wise man's approach there threatened to be a tumult. Without the walls there were loud shouts. I was one of the troop of several hundred horse assigned to duty that day. Jews who at first had seemed so silent were now in an uproar. Toward the Romans they might preserve the attitude of humility, but toward the prophet they were demonstrative of their violence and their hatred. Vehemence, however, was not shown so much by the common people. They seemed to look upon the wise man as one of themselves, inspired. He had told the lowly that he had come to bring peace unto them. The rulers did not want peace. They desired war.

When Jesus entered the city it seemed that every house and workshop had poured forth their human contents into the streets. It was

as much as the cavalry could do to keep the way clear. The weak were trod to the ground and there were wild cries. A blacksmith with his hammer in his hand raised his arm and shouted defiance. I was nearest him as he stood just without the door of his shop. With the point of my spear I touched his hairy breast and ordered him to drop his weapon. Sullenly he obeyed. This was the only man whom I saw bearing the aspect of sedition. But the rich Jews were constantly crying that the prophet was commanding the people to arm themselves against the Romans. Looking back over my shoulder, I could see him coming slowly along. It had been rumored that he was going to the Temple, and toward this edifice the Roman cavalry proceeded, clearing the way. Never walked one with a step so free from pride. Never upon a multitude did man look with such compassion. How unlike a conqueror! Instead of fulfilling the expectation of prophecy, as the rich man read the book, he came as a quiet and a gentle rebuke to those who assumed power. To me his bearing was a study. It was the first time that I had ever seen potential meekness. It was something new to the Roman world.

As we were ascending the hill, toward the gate that opened into the Temple court, I espied Belthius amid the throng. Pushing his

way to the edge of the crowd, he walked along beside my horse. "What are they going to do with him?" he asked, gazing eagerly up into my face.

"What has he done that we should do anything?" I replied.

"What has he done? Do you not see that we are in the midst of an insurrection?"

"I see a number of the leading Jews striving to create one; but the masses of the people are peaceable. Those shouts you hear are their shouts of joy."

"Joy!" he repeated contemptuously. "They are insults from those too degraded to feel their own degradation."

I suppose that I must have felt kindly toward Jesus, perhaps not so much on account of his appearance or his reputed wisdom as for the reason that the rich Jews were desperately set against him. I could see that if he brought a new religion he brought it for the poor. It could not have been other than an insult, since the streets of the Jewish heaven were said to be paved with gold. This man's feet, shod with worn and dusty sandals, could not, in the opinion of the wealthy, walk with grace upon those resplendent bricks.

At the Temple gate the squadron halted, and, in open order, permitted Jesus and as much of the crowd as could, to enter the

Temple. Some one cried out, "Stone him." But no stone was cast. It was impossible, however, to keep order among the people, for the crowd without was greater than the throng that had gained entrance. As for myself, I should have welcomed a riot. There was many a fanatic that I should have liked to trample into the ground. For a long time all within the Temple was quiet, but suddenly there arose a mighty uproar, and outward the people came pouring. We charged upon them, lest they should excite a stampede among the great multitude in the streets below. The out-rush was stopped. A priest whose vestments had been torn demanded that the soldiers expel the usurper.

"What has he done?" questioned the centurion.

"He is driving the people from the Temple. Can you not see?"

"But whence comes his power?"

"He has no power. The people are fools."

"Then why should we not arrest them for being fools? It is the fool that is dangerous in a crowd."

"But he has threatened to destroy the Temple."

"If he possesses no power, how can he?"

"But he assumes to have power. He not only threatens to destroy the Temple, but

says that in three days he will build it up again."

"And if he does, you will not have sustained much of a loss," said the centurion.

After a long time quiet was restored. Belthius, whose strength had enabled him to force his way in, came out and spoke to me as I sat on my horse. "This man Jesus has passed beyond all bounds. He says that he is the Son of God—the living God."

"If the God is living, is it not possible for him to have a son?" I replied, not that I regarded such a thing as possible but that it was my desire to goad this Jew. He scowled at me. "You heathens are enemies of your own law," he said. "You counsel insurrection. Is it because you are looking for an excuse to murder the people?"

"In your hatred of this quiet and inoffensive man there is murder, Belthius," said I. "You would have the people tear him limb from limb."

I showed impatience and he thought it wise to move away from me, but before he went he looked hard at me and said: "To favor a stranger and an impostor, you would turn against your friends. Milthias, who loves you, is stricken with grief at the course you have taken. In his father's house all are sad, for they feel that no longer can you find com-

panionship within those walls. Argument and reason—the book of the Lord might convert even a Roman, a heathen, a worshiper of idols, but the acknowledgment of the claims of a man such as is now trampling upon every honest Jew's faith puts you beyond all hope."

"But it does not put me beyond all reason," I replied, and he sneered at me. "Reason is a god-given quality. The Lord has given to the Romans——"

"Power," I broke in, motioning him to stand off.

"The promise of eternal darkness. That is the Lord's promise to you," he said, and turning about he went his way.

CHAPTER XVIII

Out in the Dark Night

THE evening came with the accustomed blast of trumpets from the Temple, and the tops of the houses were dark with people. Night fell, and with the exception of the broiling and roistering of men in places where wine had been drunk, there was no disturbance. Until the hour was late we, the cavalry, sped up and down many of the streets. We saw no place where it would seem that Jesus had taken up his quarters. It was near the dawn when we were ordered to return to the Tower, but at the gate I found Milthias. He said that he had been waiting for me. I obtained leave to remain for a time with him. At that hour he was not permitted to enter the citadel. The moon was shining. Within sight of the sentinels on the towers we walked about. It was some time before he made known the object of his unseasonable visit. Finally we sat down upon a ruined wall.

"It has been a hard day," I said.

"Yes, not alone for you, Eradmus, but for

the most of us—for Jerusalem." From among the stones he plucked out a piece of the plastering and for a time sat crumbling it in silence. Then he said: "Belthius has told me what he said to you. Not from me nor from any member of our household had he the authority to say it. We grieve, it is true, that you take sides against us; there can never come a time when we all of us shall cease to be grateful to you. But for you my father, mother and sister would never have seen me again. They cannot forget.'

"Milthias, you needed not have come at such an hour to tell this to me. It was something else that you desired to say. Speak it."

But it was hard for him to speak. He plucked out more of the plaster and sat crumbling it. After a time he said: "You know that I have an affection for you."

"Yes, know it so well that I do not demand any proof."

"But we have neighbors and kinsfolk who are aggrieved when they know that you have broken bread with us. They speak about it, some of them rudely, and with it they reproach my father. It is not only because they know that you are a Roman and therefore in their opinion a worshiper of idols, but because they have heard that you give countenance to one who keeps company not only with publicans

and sinners, but who chooses his closest friends from among them."

"And therefore, Milthias, you would request me to stay away from your house?"

"No," he said, brushing the plaster dust from his hands and taking me by the arm, "I cannot make such a request."

"You do not need to, Milthias. Your distress is a command."

"Eradmus, I owe my life to you."

"And I owe mine to you. Without your help I could not have escaped from Britain. I could not have sailed the boat. The villagers would have killed me. This should make us closer in regard than if obligation were all on one side. But to your father you owe more of a duty than you possibly could to me, though I might have saved your life a hundred times. You owe your existence to him. Therefore obey his wishes though he may not have expressed them to you. Keep clear of my company. I shall take it nothing ill. And when these unquiet times are passed into remembrance only, then again shall we be brothers."

He embraced me. He said that I was noble. I knew his position, and I would not make it harder for him. But I dreaded the time when I should not be at liberty to go to him. He was a link between Vloden and me. With his

hand on my bare arm, did he feel that I was thinking of her? "Is she still as much as ever in your mind?" he asked. I did not pretend to misunderstand him. I said that she could never be less alive, less vivid.

"I do not believe that she has forgotten you," he said. "Such a heart could not forget."

"There is a gentleness in even a fierce love," I said. "And it must be her love that at times makes me feel more kindly toward the world, the members of this great, rude household. I shall never see her again, it is true, but more than old Limprosus' philosophy she almost convinces me that there is a—a——"

"A soul," said Milthias.

"Yes, a soul. The birth and the life of love is as marvelous as a living God. It may be that one creates the other. Love must be the creator. Love is older than your God."

But Milthias could not abide this. He gripped my arm. "Eradmus," he said, "you light a candle, but instead of looking about you in the light thereof, you blow it out."

He arose to take his leave of me, but it was in sadness and not in offense at anything that I had said. Without another word we parted. Strange that, lying on my couch this morning, my love for Vloden should seem so much stronger than ever before. I had possessed a love, and now that love possessed me. Having

had so limited an experience with women, you might say, none at all, I wondered when first I beheld that flashing Jewess if she possessed the power to rob the barbarian of my heart. But soon I knew that she did not. Soul! What was it that now lived within me and which had not lived before?

The day broke with rumbling thunder and with rain. From the battlements I looked down upon the city. Into the market places the camels were bringing their loads of fruits and of grain. Limprosus came up and stood beside me. Off on excursions into the country and on duty in the city, I had of late found no opportunity to talk with him. The rain ceased. A dome-shaped cloud stood gilded and resplendent in the sky. Some time we stood together before either of us spoke. It was not because there lay between us a cause for embarrassment, but that each was disposed to silence. I was the first to speak.

"Did you see the man Jesus?"

"Yes, I was in the Temple when he drove out the multitude. I doffed my soldier raiment so that I might be near to him, but the press was too great."

"How did he drive them from the Temple?"

"It seemed to me that he had caught up a sunbeam and had made a lash of it. But when he threw it down it was a mere cord."

"Your willing fancy did much for him," I replied. Limprosus shook his head. "My fancy could not have aided him to frighten the people and to drive them out. The Jews, some of them, fled from their money. Was that the power of fancy? Have I not seen them stand over their gold until they were speared to death? He called them thieves, or said that they had made of the Temple a den of thieves. The doves for the sacrifice were cooing. One of them, a white bird, escaped and circled round and round his head—smaller and smaller the circle until it appeared but a wreath about his brow. I did not flee when the others fled. I stood with bowed head as slowly he came walking toward me. I raised my eyes, and something within me said, 'Master.'

"'Thou hast much faith and with little cause. Peace be unto you,' he said to me, and upon my heart there poured a great warmth. I had thought him the disciple of wisdom. I found in him the Son of God. Oh, it is true, Eradmus. He has come with a wisdom that the world has never known before. The rich may scoff at him and the scholars may seek to pick flaws in his teachings, but never was there a philosopher so wise as he. I listened when he rebuked the rulers. I was thrilled with gladness when he turned upon me his forgiv-

ing look; thrilled, for I knew that the better part of me was a soul, and that this soul had been pardoned, that I was no longer a spiller of man's blood. You cannot understand. Neither can I; but it seemed to me that I had lived all of my life for that look of forgiveness."

More than ever did I now believe that Limprosus was losing his mind. I was willing to agree that in the man Jesus there was no harm. I was willing to acknowledge him wise, but in my heart I could not read that there *was* a God. Then how could I look upon him as the Son of God? In the atmosphere there were strange influences at work. I had been so softened by my love for a woman as almost to believe that there might be such a thing, condition or essence as soul. Men died; ideas lived, and might not the idea be the evidence of soul? But suddenly my reason arose and I said: "I cannot believe with you, Limprosus. This is a material world. If there be a God, and if the welfare of the soul is his especial care, why did he not make himself known to the great men that are gone? Why was Julius Caesar ignorant of this God? Why did he make himself known only to the cattle-raising and cattle-stealing Jews of the plains? If he created all, and all were his children, why did

he reveal himself to a Moses and not to an Alexander? And if he knew that he was to send his son upon the earth, why did he wait so long, until all of the greatest ones of the earth had passed away?"

"I will not attempt to answer your questions, Eradmus."

"Ah, that is the trouble. No one can answer them."

"But I will say that in the history of God's world there has as yet been but a speck of time." And then after a silence, during which he stood looking out over the city, he said: "You marvel at my faith, and so do I. Faith is ever a marvel unto itself. But if it comes of no reason and no experience, whence comes it? I have read with the Jew Leboac the book that tells about their God, but it was mere poetry. I desired fact. I read Plato again and again, but here were the surmises of a great and restless mind; but Jesus convinces me with one word, with one look, that there is a God and that he himself is the Savior of man. With you, however, argument is of no use, for in your mind I stand not upon a rock but float on a cloud. To feel is stronger than merely to think. To know without knowing why, is mysticism; but in mystery there may be hidden the profoundest truth. Reason is materialism striving for spirituality. Intuition

is a thought born not of the brain but of the spirit. You ask why God did not reveal himself to the greater men of all nations? Perhaps he did when they became greater—when blinding flesh fell from about their souls. Eradmus, within a few days I shall quit the army. My freedom has been offered me. No longer am I to fight for the empire of man. Never again will I shed man's blood."

"But what are you going to do?" I inquired. "You are too far along in life to enter with success into a new calling. You have no money. How can you live?"

He smiled upon me. "There was a time when I dreaded the infirmity of age," said he, "but that time is gone. Life has opened up anew. And if I am to live but a day, I shall look forward to it with happiness. That which is to come must come without ill to me. Not far from here, in a poor quarter of the city, lives an old man. I must conduct you to his house."

"But perhaps I do not care to go with you, Limprosus. I should find him full of arguments against common sense."

"When you have seen him you will be pleased and you will thank me."

I should have gone with him that day, but permission to leave the citadel was denied me. To the eye and to the ear the city was peace-

able and quiet, but within the walls there were still whirlwinds of yesterday's storm. So far as was known, the Prophet had not as yet taken his departure. In the evening, Sempre, who had been on guard at the Palace of Herod, said that a deputation from the leading Jews, the priests of the Temple, had called on Pilate with a request that Jesus be expelled from the city; but so far as Sempre was able to determine, the request had been refused. A number of days passed, and though it was certain that the Prophet was still in Jerusalem, yet I did not see him. Concerning him there were many rumors and but few of them were worthy of belief. One old man, standing at the gate of the Tower, cried out that Jesus had commanded the people not to pay tribute to Tiberius. A soldier, speaking from the wall, inquired if that were not the sort of counsel the Jews desired.

"It is the sort that will shed our blood and enwrap the Temple in fire," the old man replied.

I do not know how many days went by when certain news came that the Prophet was no longer in Jerusalem.

One evening Limprosus came to me with word that I had, upon his request, been granted permission to accompany him. I was waiting. As we passed down near the portals

of the Temple, he halted for a few moments to gaze upward and to muse. On other subjects his mind was strong enough, but when speaking of the man from Galilee he showed a childlike readiness to believe everything that unto him attributed power and mystery.

The streets were dark, no moon, no stars, for the sky was cast over with clouds. Losing our way, we turned into a stone-cutter's yard, where we were likely to bruise ourselves, but the stone-cutter heard us and came out with a lantern. Seeing that we were Romans, he seemed to regret having shown to us such a kindness, and walking in front of us with his light obscured, he was about to leave us again in darkness when Limprosus said to him: "We would do you no harm. Peace be unto you."

He turned about and held his lantern up, revealing himself in the light, an old man with white beard. "You speak of peace," he replied as we came nearer to him. "Where is it to be found?"

"In the heart," Limprosus answered.

"You have said," he rejoined, lowering his light now that we were within a few feet of him. We were about to pass him when he put his lantern on a stone and said that if we were not in too much haste he would like to hold converse. "With you," he added, speaking to Limprosus. "Whom seek ye?"

"A friend that lives down among the poor, but who is rich."

"Rich, and living among the poor?"

"Rich in the greatest and most enduring of all riches—in the belief that the man from Galilee has brought the promise of eternal life." The stone-cutter stroked his beard and for a time said nothing. He took up his lantern as if he would go away, but put it down again. "Are you a believer in him?" he inquired, his eyes fixed upon Limprosus. The old Roman answered, "I am."

"Will you tell me why you believe?"

"That is something I may not be able to do," said Limprosus. "My belief comes from a faith and this faith was born within me."

"Then you have seen him?"

"I have spoken to him, and he bade my heart be at peace, and it is."

The old man looked at him a long time. "I went from my work to see him, but the multitude was so great that I could not," he said. "But one of my workmen was in the Temple at the time the people were driven out. He returned with the word that Jesus was not the king of the Jews as we expected a king to come, but that he was the true Messiah."

"He is to make all people as one," said Limprosus. "When the time comes there will

be neither Jew nor Roman nor Barbarian, but all will be souls."

The old man invited us to go into his house to break bread with him, but we told him that we could not spare the time. So we thanked him and passed on. How quiet the city was, almost like one great tomb! Here and there was a light, shining dimly through a lattice darkly veiled, or shooting from under a door like quick thrusts of a spear. Remote from the more busy thoroughfares, there was no one stirring abroad from his habitation. From some of the houses, from the meaner ones, too, it seemed, there came a murmur as of prayer.

Limprosus reproached himself for not having brought a torch or lantern. It was my impression that we had come many miles and I thought that we were lost, when my friend halted and knocked upon a door. In the house a light was burning. Soon the door was opened, and a voice bade us enter. We did so, and when we had come where it was light I cried out in surprise: "Nebuces!"

It was the old Egyptian, mummied reminder of my life in Rome. But he did not look older. He looked different; his shrewdness of countenance had given place to a softness, a gentleness. He embraced me. In his eyes there were tears. In his voice when he spoke

there was music as if from an old and mellowed instrument. He said that he had been waiting for Limprosus to bring me to his house. I could scarcely say anything. I was astonished at his appearance. I remembered him as a liar and a thief. Now he appeared like a saint. He laughed gently at my surprise, when we had seated ourselves upon cushions which he had brought forward for us. Knowing that this old man had sought wisdom, even during the time when his Egyptian nature was so strong within him as to induce him to lie and to steal, I inquired of him whether he had found that which he had sought. He answered: "I have found all wisdom, Eradmus. I have been baptized."

"Baptized! What is that?"

He explained to me and it seemed foolish, but I did not controvert him. I permitted him to tell his story. He had been taken down into the water, his sins had been washed from him, and he had become a member of the Prophet's great and growing household. There had been a time when I could not have believed in his reformation. Now I knew that he told the truth. I could see it. He told me of miracles that he had seen Jesus perform, and now I could not believe him, for it was against my reason. I began to wonder as some of the rich Jews wondered. Why

was it that Jesus addressed himself to the despised, the liar and the thief? But I did not come to argue. I let Nebuces tell his story. He had not remained long in Rome after I left him. My departure having emancipated him, he turned toward Judea, the land where true wisdom was to be found. The old Children of Israel had brought it from Egypt. Nebuces settled in Jerusalem, going forth at certain times to work in the vineyards. He put aside the Egyptian tablets and took up the Jewish book. He began to get glimpses of true wisdom, but his nature was not much amended. He was not a man of truth, and he did not steal because he was afraid of the law. These traits were born within him and he did not deem it possible ever to feel that they were gone out of him; but he was born again, and this time his nature was pure. His second birth was his belief, his baptism. On the edge of the desert he had met the Prophet when there were but few with him. In the shade of the evening he sat himself down at the feet of this regenerator of man, and listened to his words of wisdom. On the following day he saw a great multitude fed with a few loaves. But even before this he had been convinced. He said that the apparent miracle alone could not have convinced him. The change had to come from the heart outward, and not through

the eye, inward. He had seen Egyptians perform wonderful feats, but they spoke no word that made him know that within him there was a soul possessed of eternal life. Now he was happy, waiting for the time when he should yield up his soul and be done with this world. He was quiet, but I knew that he was a fanatic. "And Limprosus and I will live here together," said he. "We will work in the vineyards. We shall be happy, knowing that we are useful to man. If we should be called upon, we will go forth to spread the work of redemption."

I desired a change of subject. As I said before, I believed that the man Jesus was wise, and that in his way he could be of service to the world. But I was not of his world. My soldier instinct began to live again. I was becoming weary of this eternal talk of peace. Out of peace I could evolve nothing but weariness. Out of war there might come glory. It was well enough for Limprosus, for he was old and his course was well-nigh spent; but I was young, and this man Jesus, as a preacher of peace, was after all my enemy. While thus I sat, musing, there came a knocking at the outer door.

CHAPTER XIX

Wrapped in a Faded Cloth

NEBUCES went to the door that opened out upon the street, and when he returned a young woman came with him. Before I had time to take note of her, Limprosus spoke her name, Eine; and arising, he placed her upon the cushion and stood looking down upon her. This was all done in a moment. Then he presented me to her. She was the woman who was to have been his wife, who married the son of the wine-merchant, who became the charioteer. But now she did not look as if her ears had ever found sweet the shout of a vulgar multitude. Her eyes were clear and her countenance bespoke a girlish innocence. She was not only fair; she was radiant. Limprosus at once noticed the change in her and the tears began to gather in his eyes; and while he was looking down upon her, she sank upon the floor at his feet and clasped him about the knees. He sought to lift her up, but she begged him to suffer her to remain at his feet

until she should tell him something that lay warm against her heart.

"I have sought you for several days," she said; "and this evening I went to the Tower and inquired for you, and as you were not there I thought you must be here, for it was into this house I saw you enter not long ago. The last time I came to you I begged money of you, telling you that I must have wine. You gave me all you had, though you had cause to despise me. I went away to drink at a place where there were wine and women, and men who are worse than the beasts of the field. In the early morning I came away, and as I walked along I met a number of people, and among them was Jesus, the Savior of men. Some one seized me and dragged me contemptuously before him, and said to him that as he found his companions among the outcasts, to take me, the vilest of the city, with him. And oh, the look that he turned upon me! But not in anger, for he could but see how wretched I was. He spoke to me. He told me to go and sin no more, and I arose into a new life, and out of my heart went all bitterness, all vileness, and I was free from evil. The tears gushed out of my eyes and I could not see, for a time; but when I could see again, the world was different. Jesus was gone. No one told me his name, but I knew.

He was gone, but I could see him in my poor heart that had been so bitter. I could see him whichever way I turned, and then, Limprosus, I went to find you. Let me kneel but a moment more. I am not supplicating to you, but am rejoicing that I have found you. And now I have a favor to ask of you. You are growing old and will soon be unable to work. Let me work for you. I will go singing to the harvest fields. I will be your wife, if you will take me, and during all the time that you live I will care for you, and when you are unable to go about I will nurse you, for I am made new and am young and strong."

Limprosus sank down and together they knelt with their arms about each other. I looked at the old Egyptian and the tears were streaming down his face. Then upon the floor he knelt and prayed as I had never heard one pray before; and though I could not comprehend all that he said, the figures that he employed, yet it all was impressed upon me.

Now I reminded Limprosus that it was time for me to return to the Tower. He arose to go with me, but I urged him to remain, as he was no longer under regulations, and that I could make my way alone. After much persuasion on my part, he yielded. So, out into the dark streets I went alone, but some-

how in the darkness there seemed to be a light, the light of that poor but beautiful creature's love for old Limprosus.

Early on the following morning, as Sempre and I were in the mess-room, I told him of what I had seen the night before. He scowled and said that he did not believe there was water enough in the sea to wash that woman clean.

"They must have enslaved your mind with some sort of Magianism," said he. "And here I must warn you. Do not permit old age and fanaticism to steal your soldier heart and soften it into foolish meekness. We are in a country of mysticism. They will tell you of a star that hung above the child Jesus, as he lay in a manger, but you must not believe it. In all ages these Jews have had something that could not have existed in other parts of the world. They do not as a people accept this man as their Christ, whatever that may mean, but they may in time, as soon as they can surround him with a sufficient number of fables. We were both of us impressed by him and acknowledged it. That ought to have been enough for Limprosus, but it was not. He must go further and take farewell of his reason. If he marries this woman—but surely he will not. She is trying to work some sort of trick upon him."

"In the main I agree with you, Sempre. But I believe that the woman is sincere."

"What! Do you believe that she can love that old man?"

"As an atonement for a wrong that she did him, yes. And I believe that in caring for him she will find true happiness. I do not base this upon any reason, other than something that I saw in her face."

"Her face!" he repeated. "Nothing could be more bloated and repulsive."

"But there is where the marvel lies," said I. "Did I not tell you that she was beautiful, like a young and innocent girl? What could have brought about such a change?"

"The spell that they threw over you," he answered. "It came of the darkness without, the lamp within—the silence everywhere. Though we may think ourselves strong in health, we are affected by the man that is ill. At a time of plague, no man is well. We are in the midst of an intellectual plague. Resist it, or you may become afflicted. Do not let them take the temper out of your sword."

I felt that he spoke wisely. My sword temperless, and I should be left without a career. The world showered its favors upon bravery and the achievements of strength. Mere wisdom meant gray hairs and ultimate neglect. "It must have been the darkness

without, the lamp within and the silence everywhere," I said. "We *are* in the midst of a great plague and I was threatened with disease. I will throw it off. It was the darkness and the lamp."

And yet I knew that it was not. There was freshness and the beauty of purity about that woman whom they had called a wanton. In her voice there was the sweet music of sincerity, but I agreed that it was the darkness and the lamp.

"And the old Egyptian," said Sempre. "You have come away in the belief that he is honest. If man is created by a god, why does that god wish to make him a liar and a thief and then, to prove his own power, consecrate him to truth and honesty?"

As I agreed to all that he said, there could be no argument.

Several days passed and with each night I expected Limprosus, but he did not come. So one morning I set out to find the house wherein I had left him. This was not easy to do. I knew the direction and but little more than that. It was not long, however, before I came to the stone-cutter's yard. The old man and a young giant were hewing a stone. I halted to speak with them. They were working slowly, and as I approached I caught the name of the

Prophet. No matter what men might be doing, they were all of them talking on the same subject, with the same name on their lips. The old man's back was toward me. The giant saw me as I approached, and stepped back and folded his arms across his great, bare chest, leaving the hammer lying on the stone. In his attitude there was dignity and no defiance. The old man turned about and looked at me. In the features of mere youth there is nothing to mark the memory, and he did not appear to recall me. I saluted him, reminded him of the night when he had shown kindness to Limprosus and to me, and he remembered. I asked him whether he knew where was situated the house of Nebuces, the Egyptian. Hereupon the giant said that he would show me the place. I said that I did not wish to take him from his work. He smiled, that same quiet smile that the Galilean seemed ever to inspire, and said that it would be a pleasure to him. Some of the Jews that stood amid their merchandise scowled at us as we passed along. The shops here were for the poor, but some of the keepers were misers, were rich and therefore hated the sight of a Roman and a Hebrew walking together, believing that so ill-assorted an association must be inspired by the man who recognized no race, no creed, no station.

But this man, the hewer of rock, did not shrink from contemptuous gaze, neither did he give scowl for scowl. Upon whomever he looked it was with a kindly eye. I asked him whether he knew the Egyptian and he answered that he had knelt with him in prayer. Soon he pointed out the house, and with a kindly word he turned about and left me.

Nebuces opened the door. He stood where the sunlight fell upon him. There was now no darkness, no lamp, and no silence everywhere, for Arab fruit venders were shouting in the street. No mystery—noontide—and yet in the old man's face there was no sign of shrewdness, of that Nile serpent wisdom which his countenance had shown me in my own home. Years may make a man gentle or they may make him crafty. Losing strength, he may acquire slyness and the knowledge to use it, like a fox, but to wear a mask in the sun is to show that it is a mask. But this man did not seek to wear other than what nature would herself have sworn to as his natural face, and yet in every feature it spoke forgiveness, truth, every virtue which the face that I had known, the face of the Nebuces in Rome, did not possess. Quietly he welcomed me, doing me the office of his most gracious courtesy; and when we had entered the room wherein I had sat before, he bade me sit down. When I had

done so he brought water in a basin, and, with gentle though commanding gesture waving my objections aside, he took off my sandals and bathed my feet. When he had wiped them with a cloth as white as the stone-cutter's marble he placed food before me, and when I had eaten, he took away the vessels and then came back with something wrapped about in cloth that was faded. He bade me take it, and it was small but heavy in my hand.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Before I came away from Rome to search for wisdom I sold the things that you left with me, and this is silver and gold, the price that they brought."

"But what I left I gave to you. This gold and silver cannot be mine. If I should take it I should feel low and mean. Besides, I think that you must have added to it. Remember, Nebuces, I still have my sword, and it alone shall bring me fortune. I know that you are true and that your heart is kind. You have persuaded me that you have found some sort of strange wisdom. You have shown me that you do not wear a mask. Your voice, which once was harsh, is now as soft as the notes of the wind instrument. Your eyes, which once were wont to pierce like steel, are now softer than the light shed by pure gold. I know that you would not willfully

counsel me to debase myself, and yet if I should bestow upon my own purposes that which you have brought me, I should feel that my honor had been bought and that in slavery it had died."

He bowed and said: "Then, my son, accept it from me, your former slave, as a gift. In Rome you could have sold me, but you gave to me my freedom, and that is more worth than all the gold."

"Then do not seek to buy it with gold."

He felt this rebuke. He bowed low and said that he had deserved it. Then he took the gold and put it by, and said that he would give it here and there to the poor, wherever he could use it to relieve hunger, but this seemed unwise, in that the poor was a multitude. So I said to him: "Give it to Limprosus."

At this moment the woman Eine came into the room. "Give it to her," I said. "She deserves it, for she is going to take care of Limprosus when he shall have grown too old to care for himself."

She spoke to me and her voice was sweet. She looked upon me, standing where a bright light fell, and I saw that she was fresh and handsome. No lamp to make deceitful shadows, and yet was she a girl in the freshness of early life. She inquired what was it

that I desired she should have, and when Nebuces had told her she drew back from his outstretched hand and shook her head. "It is not gold that has been defiled," Nebuces said to her. "It is the gold of gratitude and therefore must be pure." But she drew back from it. I told her that if it were mine I ought to have the right and the pleasure of bestowing it upon my friend. Limprosus was my friend. When I mentioned his name her face brightened and she said: "If it is for him we will wrap it in his mantle. Come with me."

There was still another room, and into it Nebuces and I followed her. Here all was of comfort and cheer, made so by her hands; and so when she had brought Limprosus' mantle I wrapped it about the money and Eine put it by for him. Then she told me that Limprosus had taken her to wife and that never before had she known what happiness was. Limprosus had gone forth to talk to the poor, she said. They liked to hear him, for he brought unto them the words of comfort.

I took my leave while the sun was shining and they came with me to the door, but out into the glare of the street they brought their own mysterious light, soft and warm. When I had returned to the Tower, Sempre said that again they had thrown a spell upon me.

THEY CAME WITH ME TO THE DOOR.

CHAPTER XX

Out in the Mountains

"THEY have given unto you their own eyes and have compelled you to look throught them," said my friend. "You may ask whence comes their power, and I may ask it, too. It is that we concede a power where truly none exists. As I said before, we saw the man Jesus. We said that he was good, whatever that may be, but Limprosus saw him in the Temple 'flash out ferocious glory from his eyes as if to storm the throne of Zeus.' We have been in a theater and the play has stolen a part of our keener senses and returned them to us with edges turned. Let us whet them with reason." And, as before, I knew that he was right.

Now had the city returned to its buying and selling, with no sign of the storm that had swept through the streets at the coming of the Prophet. Whither he was gone no one seemed to know, but sometimes there came word from the land far out toward the Jordan or the sea that with his disciples he walked

abroad, performing miracles in the open light. Now also came for me an uneventful life. Sometimes there were rumors that the Jews were about to rise against us, and more than once we watched throughout the long night, waiting for them, the younger ones among us hoping that they would come; but the days and the weeks passed by and nothing fell to relieve our life of dullness. Limprosus did not come often to the Tower. When he did he came to preach to Sempre and to me, and this grew tiresome. Once in the mess-room he talked to all that would listen, and he talked well, as one grappled about by strong convictions; but he could not tie my reason with his silver cord. In gratitude he accepted the money that I had left for him; he said that it should be well laid out, among the poor; and I knew that he spoke the truth. I shall not forget the farewell that he took of his sword. It was night, and the rays of a brazen lamp fell upon the blade as it lay unsheathed upon a couch. He did not speak to it with that tenderness which I should have expected to come of long association.

He said to the sword: "Thou error of man, thou sustainer of false pride, insensate glutton of death, I take my leave of thee. In thy double edges, thy two sexes, thou art the father of ambitions and the mother of dust.

Thy drink is blood and thy music is a groan. Thou art almost as old as human evil. Thy flatterers have kissed thee even to the cutting of their lips. Thrown into the air, thou knowest no favor, and would fall upon friend and foe alike. Where thou hast been unsheathed once for liberty thou hast flashed a thousand times that man might be made a slave. I have given unto thee the strengthful years of my life, that others might die, that the rich man might be richer, that a mob in Rome might cry welcome to a heartless conqueror. The tears of the widows and the orphans that thou hast made would submerge thee in a wave, but rust will dull thy edge and eat thee up. Thy brothers may live throughout many ages to come, but a love that was born in Nazareth will outlast them all. I take my leave of thee."

Some of the legionaries laughed, Sempre among them, but as Limprosus had spoken quietly and seemingly from the heart, I respected him. He asked me to come with him as far as the outer gate, and when we had reached the wicket he said: "In the twilight, on a knoll, we looked out over the country. Now in the dark we look out over a city, but in the darkness of this city there is a light that shall illumine the world. God be with you."

And so he took his departure. I knew that

never would he come again to the Tower. He had told Sempre that he had taken Eine to wife, and I think that this was the reason that Sempre laughed at him when he took leave of his sword.

One morning when it seemed that no longer could I endure this dullness, when I felt that with the sword of Limprosus I had fallen under the curse and was to be eaten up with rust, there came news of a rebellion that had arisen in the hill country not far from the village of Nain. Our garrison was called upon for as many men as could be spared. Through the streets we swept, out into the country, and the air rushed by, tingling my nerves. It was well enough for an old man to bid farewell to his sword. So did misers bid farewell to their gold, when death outstared them, but to myself I said, "As for me, let me hew a pathway up the mountain or sink with my sword in the valley."

In Nain we halted. The town was in a state of emotion. It could scarcely be called excitement. It was said that Jesus had just performed a miracle. A man whom I conversed with would have sworn that a widow's son had been raised from the dead. What he said made no impression on me. I ascribed it all to hallucination. I did not question him; the supporters of the man Jesus had gone too far,

and I no longer felt an interest in him. Sempre and I had gone to this man to get hay for the horses. He believed in miracles, but he charged us full price for the hay. He said that a poor man must live. Sempre replied: "But he needs not live always on the sale of one truss of hay."

"If it be not worth all that you have paid, your money shall be returned. Rome knows the price of provender."

"Not when some of the consuls buy it," said Sempre. Then to me he added: "We came out to put down a rebellion and we are told of a miracle. In proper season we should have heard of it in Jerusalem. It will be blown like the seeds of thistles."

"But I saw the miracle," said the man. "I saw the widow's son that was dead, arise and walk."

"Very likely. But have you any wine in your house?"

"I have none. But are we not all of us forbidden to give wine to the soldiers?"

We did not answer him.

The report of the miracle was in the air. It hung on every lip. Our centurion said that we might be compelled to fight an army raised up from the dead and armed with the swords of the ancient kings. Sempre said to him that at one time I was like to become a believer in

those unreasonable stories, and I had to defend myself against this charge. The soldiers laughed at me. One of them, scoffing, remarked: "When this king shall be crowned, mayhap he will invite you to be present at the ceremony. But I wonder what they will crown him with. The Jews will not part with so much gold as would encircle his brow."

In the night there came news that promised us something to do. A robber chief, not my old friend Barabbas, but one named Hebdul, an Arab, was frightening the mountains with his band. Early in the morning we mounted and rode until evening was nearly come, and met no one save peaceable folk that were eager to hear news of the Prophet. But as we were going through a valley there fell a complete surprise. We were suddenly surrounded by a horde as fierce as the Britons. Some of our undisciplined horses took fright, and this caused confusion. We were ordered to dismount. The ground was rough. The enemy, Arabs, Greeks, Jews, came shouting down upon us, but ah, how glorious it was again to fight, to give drink to a thirsty sword! It was like a thrilling game. And what a joy to feel a great strength leap into the arm! But though wild and unorganized, the wretches fought with unexpected intelligence. They

fell upon the men detailed to hold the horses and butchered them. Now we were surrounded. The centurion fell. I was by his side, and I fought over his body. The lieutenant fell, and in a loud voice I shouted the words of command. I seemed to have been inspired. The men obeyed me. Hand to hand I closed with Hebdul. I caught his spear and shivered the staff. He attacked me furiously with his dagger. It was all I could do to keep him off. A horrible grin overspread his countenance. He must have felt that he was to kill me. Upon my buckler I caught a fierce thrust. The dagger hung. He strove to pull it out, but I turned the buckler about to hold the blade between the lips of the wound in the tough bull's hide. He staggered. I tripped him and he fell, and with my sword I pinned him to the ground. I cut off his head and held it high. His men were seized with panic. They fled, and then the Roman sport began. It was dark when the men were recalled. Every officer had been slain. I was the logical commander, and my breast was full of pride.

Early on the following morning we summoned men from the vineyards not far away and compelled them to assist us with the burying of the dead. The horses had not many of them been killed. The wounded men were

conveyed to Nain. Then began our homeward journey. We had suffered greatly, but the band had been wiped out.

"Your career has dawned!" said Sempre, as we rode along, he and I, at the head of the column.

"I have been fortunate," I answered.

"You have been strong," he said. And we rode along in silence, and in my heart I knew that he was not envious of me. Now with new interest was everything endowed. To taste of glory makes the whole world bright. Now did it seem that kindly fate, with fingers rosy tipped, would for a moment hold aside the veil that hid the life to come, and show to me the figure of a conqueror, the son of a maker of swords. The forestalling quickness with which I had seized the favors of an opportunity, thrown alike to all, set forth the proof beyond a doubt that I was born to be, not a persuader, but a commander of men.

"As you were swiftly dealing the blows of death you looked like an avenging god," Sempre said to me; and still in his heart there was no envy, for his eyes were bright with admiration.

"I fought without thinking how I looked," I made reply to him. "But there was a time when in the thickness of a fight I was impatient

of the praise that I thought must come. And afterward I hungered almost in vain for a word from an old soldier—Limprosus. But about him he wrapped the worn and faded mantle of indifference."

"And now," said Sempre, "he has wrapped about him the glaring mantle of a woman's scarlet life. Once since he took forensic leave of his sword I met him in the street, and I said: 'How now, Limprosus, swear you yet with Prometheus, by the winged dog of Jupiter when things go wrong?' And he answered, 'Youth, you ought to know that I swear not at all.'

" 'Neither by the dog of Egypt, the dog of Socrates that had no wings?' And he said, 'I swear not by things on earth or in heaven.' 'But,' said I, 'you parted with your sword and took up a weapon that may stab you—a woman. Was it not your old Diogenes who threw away a dish of olives and seized a tart? He gathered up something sharper and so have you, Limprosus, and you are old.' 'I am old,' he said, 'but with Job I may believe that with aged men is wisdom, and in the length of days understanding.' "

"With Jove, did he say?" I asked, interrupting him.

"No, with one Job, the ancient dramatist of the Jews. I thought, too, that he spoke of

Jove, but he corrected me. Why I came to speak of our old and now almost senile friend was this: With all of his years in the army he never seized upon a chance such as you have. He never turned the garment of defeat inside out to display the silken lining of victory. The dust of the book-shelf blinded his soldier eye."

"But was not great Julius a man of books?" I said, to make a show of warding off his pleasant flattery.

"He did not make himself heavy and dull with the reading of them. He wrote books with his sword. Ah, glance back at the men, Eradmus. How fondly they look upon you! Your way is now clear. Your advancement will be swift."

But I knew that he had spoken out of his unselfish desire. The ears of men in high places are dull. It is hard to shout from the plain up to the top of the mountain. In the Roman Senate there was no one to speak a word for me. Merit is a slow traveler, and my achievement might lag in weariness and perish before it reached the threshold of the mighty. I gave words to this fear, and Sempre was silent, and a bitterness came into my heart. But after a while he cheered me. He said that my deservings would shout with a loud voice.

When we returned to the Tower there was sadness in this, the household of war. Men looked in vain for the coming of their friends, and the loss of so many officers was a crippling blow. The commander sent for me. I had waited. It was night. Soft lamps shed their luster amid the rich hangings of his room. I bowed low.

"Is your name Eradmus?"

"It is," I answered, meeting his eye.

"Who was or is your father?"

"My father was Capimentius."

"Ah, the swordmaker? Did he not die——"

"Under the frown of the Emperor," I interrupted him.

"Ah, so I thought. But you will retrieve his name. It may take time, but I will see to it that your interests are advanced. For the present, serve as you have served. Your name is already inscribed on the roll of honor."

Feeling that I was mounting the stairway to quick promotion, I withdrew. Hope, born of man, is sometimes stronger than man himself. It may buoy him, or in its intensity may give to him a fever. And thus was I afflicted that night, with a fever, a burning impatience, the haste of hope. On the morrow the men who had looked so fondly on me, believing that my quickness and my valor had saved

them from destruction, again were companions with me, regarding me simply as one of themselves.

The days passed, the weeks came and slowly melted away, and I was still the same, a common soldier ready to risk his life. One day in a small market place I came upon Milthias. I would have let him pass without speaking to him, but he halted and drew me aside beneath an ancient and almost ruined porch. Rain had begun to fall. I inquired about his father, his mother and his sister, and he said that they all of them were well. I asked him whether he had of late seen Limprosus, and it was with a sad smile that he answered:

"Ah, we thought to make him welcome to our house, for he cast off all of the vestiges of idolatry and embraced the Jewish faith. But he went too far. He acknowledges publicly that Jesus is the Christ. You remember my cousin Belthius? Strange to say it, but he also has become affected. Recently he came with a marvelous story. In the village of Nain he has an aunt, and this aunt a son. The son was stricken and died. Belthius was not there at the time of the death of the youth, but arrived in season for the burial. All preparations had been made. Suddenly Jesus appeared and raised the son from the dead. When

Belthius told this story, I looked at him in wonder. I asked him if he did not know that it might be a trick, set to catch the ignorant? Once to cross him meant a dark frown, but now he turned upon me a lightsome countenance, as thus he made answer: 'When my aunt wept over her son as the breath was going out of his body, she knew that this suffering and this departure of the loved one was not a trick. There was no trickery when with tender hands he was prepared for the tomb. They took him forth to bury him. Jesus met them. He spoke the word of life to the boy and he lives. Can that be a trick?' Then we all of us sat there in silence. Any one could see that a great change had taken place in Belthius, that he was gentler in manner and that his eyes were softer. He had been proud of his physical strength, and although a Jew and a believer in God, he had not always restrained his passion. We looked at one another and then at Belthius, and then again at one another, not knowing what to say. No one, it seemed, was desirous of taking the lead in what must end in a long and tiresome discussion. So, after a time, we looked to the head of the household. My father arose and walked up and down in silence. Then he called for the roll of the prophets, which he well knew by heart.

When my sister had brought the book, father took it and sat down. But he did not read. He turned to Belthius and said: 'You know this book.' 'Yea,' Belthius answered. 'Have you not read of those that were stoned to death?' 'Yea,' answered Belthius. 'Then read it again and ponder over it.' Belthius arose and said that he would depart, and he went his way. Since then the name of our kinsman has not been spoken in the house where until lately he was welcome. You may ask what I thought. I must tell you that he has lost a part of his mind. I knew where he was lodged for the night, after he left our house, and I went to him. I wanted to find out what peculiar part of his mind he had lost. He received me as kindly as if he had not with looks been thrust from our door. I said to him that I did not come as a reminder of a misunderstanding, but as one seeking to understand.

During the life of no man is the world ready to receive a prophet,' said he. 'The prophet must have come long years ago, or is to come far in the future, when all of the men that are now living shall have passed away. The fact that you are living is proof to you that Jesus is not a prophet of the Lord. Yet you believe that Elijah was a prophet, because he came a long time ago. Jesus is the king

promised to us. His crown is eternal life and his kingdom is love.'

"I asked whether he had learned all this simply by looking upon a miracle, and he said that he had heard Jesus preach and that he had talked with him. But, Eradmus," Milthias broke off suddenly, "you do not appear to be as much interested as you were the last time we were together. Have you changed?"

"I was never interested to the extent of believing in the impossible," I replied. "Power impresses me. The conqueror impresses me. The man Jesus, stirring Jerusalem to its Arabic and Greek dregs, impressed me, but I can never care anything for religions or for men who represent them."

The rain ceased and we parted. He said nothing of my achievement in the mountains. Perhaps he had not heard of it. O ambition, there are never voices enough to shout thy demands!

As I passed through a crowd, on my way to the Tower, I heard men say that the Prophet was in the city.

CHAPTER XXI

Whom Ye Seek Ye Shall Find

NOW there was no sign of a riot, and the troops were not ordered out on extra duty. I heard it said that some of the Jews had hired men to slay the Prophet; that the wretches had tried; that he had spoken but a word and that they had fallen on the ground and for a time lay there as if dead. The old man that once had stood at the Tower gate, shouting against Jesus, came and shouted again. A crowd of idlers gathered and stood about him, and he delivered to them an oration of hate and vengeance. I was ordered to go out and command him to depart. I pushed through the throng and came to where he stood, in the midst of men that did not look as if they would stop short of murder. I told him that he must go away, and he scowled upon me. "Does the empire of Rome so despise the Jews that it would send an order by one man?" he cried.

"Depart, or I will smite you to the ground."

The ruffians made way for him and he went away, muttering against the Romans. This

was a trifling incident, but it came near costing me my life. Later in the day, while I was walking in a lonesome part of the city, I was attacked by some of these same ruffians, set on by the murderous old dotard. Stones were cast at me and I was forced to fly; but later I returned with several of my friends and for a long time we stood about, but could find none of the miscreants. As we were returning I saw the Prophet going into the house of a poor man. At the threshold he turned about and looked at me; and again I felt his mysterious power. "Whom ye seek ye shall find," he said. None of us spoke a word, and he passed on into the house. We came away, wondering what he meant; and we had arrived nearly at the gate when before us there appeared an old man, bowing low with humbleness. It was the same old man that had set the ruffians upon me. He was alone. To smite him, gray and submissive as he was, would have been the act of a coward. "I beg your forgiveness," he said. "Peace be unto you."

"Why have you so changed toward me?" I inquired.

"A man may change in the twinkling of an eye, not only toward one man but toward the whole world," he answered. He looked at me and the hate was gone out of his eyes. He

spoke again and we stood to listen. "With evil in my heart I denounced Him and cried aloud for His blood; but even then, while I was preaching, He suddenly appeared in the midst of the throng and commanded peace. My old knees gave way beneath me, and I sank upon the ground, frothing at the mouth; but He said 'Arise,' and when I arose, He was not there, but I saw as if by a new lamp, freshly trimmed, and in my heart there was no hate."

We came our way and suffered him to go his way; and when we were in the citadel, in the mess-room, Sempre said to me: "In trickery the Jews are the masters of the Egyptians. We ought to have punished him with a lash. He saw that he was in our power, and that was his way of getting out."

"But," said I, "how did the Galilean know whom we sought and that we should find him?"

"On his part it was a shrewd guess. Once an old woman told my fortune and I marveled at her wisdom. Those who make it their business to guess, sometimes guess well. But why should we, Romans of the world, engage in an almost ceaseless discussion of this man, denizen of a hamlet? I am weary of hearing of him! From Rome there came to me a long letter, and I read it over and over again, not

because it was of so much interest, but because it did not mention him, this man likely to come upon us at all times from the desert, where to utter the one word, 'Behold!' is construed into wisdom. A conqueror comes to Rome, and the trumpets peal forth his glory, and behind his chariot a queen is chained. The people shout, corn is given to them; and the flowers wither, and the theater is hushed, and the fountain plays alone in the moonlight. The noise of the triumph has passed away. But the triumph of this man Jesus is in men's whispers—never ending day nor night. It is here, among these soldiers, in the mind of the man as he scours his brass or patches up a spear rent in his shield."

"There was a tumult when He came at first," I said.

"Yes, a shout of surprise, but now it is the tumult of men's eyes. It is in looking and sometimes in saying not a word. I am weary of it all. I would rather be in Britain, listening at night to the howling of hungry wolves—rather than to hear the eternal whisper here. A soothsayer, keeping silent his Ides of March, he looks at you and in his eye is the sorrowful shadow of some great calamity. He smiles faintly, and in the smile is the end of man. You remember the day when they said that he had cast out devils? I believe that he casts

them in, for when he looks at me my heart stands still; and then I hear that eternal whisper, whisper of the men about me. A man to fight must have strength, but he robs me of it. A man to dispute must have words, but in his presence I am dumb. What is it that he would have me acknowledge? That he is the Son of God? Let him prove that there is a God. He is my enemy, and I cannot put up my shield against him. Through my brass his eye pierces, searching for my heart. He is a menace unto Rome, the world. Let them order me to cut him down. Let me see if he can ward off steel!"

Was this the Sempre that had ever been so cool? He strode about the room with his sword in his hand. With his blade he struck the couch whereon Limprosus had slept. "Here is where the old man took final leave of his senses and his sword," he said. "Who could blame him? The whispering always in the air had robbed him of his mind. Ah, silent and eternal mystery, how much louder in men's hearts than a triumph!"

Some one whispered that Sempre had been drinking, and he caught the sound though not the words. "Whisper, whisper eternally," he said. "Whisper me to death. I am weary of it all."

He lay down, and after a time he slept, but

it was long before sleep came to balm my senses. I was working for ungrateful masters. My reward had not come. A man, a politician, a fellow new to arms, had been appointed to fill the gap left by one who died when I had saved the day; but I was neglected. What was my ultimate aim? To hear the shout of Rome? To conquer Britain! To possess Vloden! After all, then, it was love itself, and not love for glory.

Sempre looked weary when early in the morning he awoke. I thought that he would now storm at himself for having railed the night before, but he did not. He went about his duties in a quiet way; and while we were breaking our fast he said to me: "I do not like these dark Jerusalem nights. This air wherein men worship age makes man old. If I had a beard it would soon turn gray. What did you think of me last night?"

"I thought that you were much disturbed."

"I was, and the cause is not yet removed, but it is worse in the night. Something strange has taken hold of me, and fighting hard against it has worn upon my nerves."

"You need a physician," I said.

"Yes, a physician with an undiscovered medicine. There is a disease that is not of man, but that afflicts man. It is the disease of a day-dream that cannot be put into words.

There comes that state of mind when substances seem as shadows, shadows substances; and the very air itself becomes as cliffs of rock, grudgingly parting to let one pass between. I have begun to remember again the hated books that I was compelled to read to my father in his library, mystic absurdities from the pens of the dreamers at Alexandria. Ah, and this reminds me that yesterday or the day before I came upon your old Egyptian, preaching to some dozen men in a stone cutter's yard. I halted for a moment to listen. I should not have known who he was but that he mentioned your name. He said that you, a Roman, the son of a swordmaker, were yielding to the spirit of Galilee, and that you would soon proclaim it to the world. 'By one of your own gods,' I cried, 'by the fox-headed Anubis, you lie!' And without anger he replied: 'There are no Egyptian deities, O youth. There is but one God, and in sandals his Son walks now upon the irreverent earth, for the earth is ignorant.' Then came those whispers from other men that were gathered about; and so I left them. But, Eradmus, will you rest in silence beneath his accusation?"

"No. But why did you not tell me this before, so that I might go to him and compel him to swallow back those spewed-up words?"

He put his hand to his head, and for a time

he thought. "Things pass out of my mind," he said. "I see and I hear, and when the days have gone, I remember that I have seen and heard. If what he says of you is to be bruited about, reaching the ear of Roman authority, it will deafen it to your deservings and poison your promotion."

I was angered, and I said that I would go to the house of the Egyptian; and I went down from the Tower while the day was still young. The stone-cutter and the giant were hewing a rock, but I did not stay to speak to them, for Sempre was a man of truth and I needed not their testimony. Coming to the Egyptian's house, I heard the words of prayer from within. I knocked loud upon the door, but the prayer was not broken, and I knocked louder than before. Now there was silence, and then the sounds of light footsteps. The door was opened, not by the Egyptian, but by Eine, the wife of Limprosus. Upon seeing me her countenance lighted with a smile, and she bade me enter. Nebuces was there and so was Limprosus, but the storm that had arisen within me was still, and without a word I stood, looking upon them. Quietly they bade me welcome, but with no word on my lips I turned about and left them. And returning to the Tower, I was ashamed to meet Sempre. I strove to arouse the storm in my breast, that

I might hasten again to the Egyptian and chastise him, but the only feeling that arose within me was one of humiliation. All during the day I stood off clear from Sempre; but in the night, as I sat where the lamp was dim, he came to me and took a seat beside me on the couch.

"Did you make the old wizard grovel at your feet?"

"No," I answered.

"Then he was not at home?"

"He was at home, and Limprosus and the woman were with him."

"And in their presence you made him to humble himself?"

"In their presence I spoke not a word, but turned away and left them!"

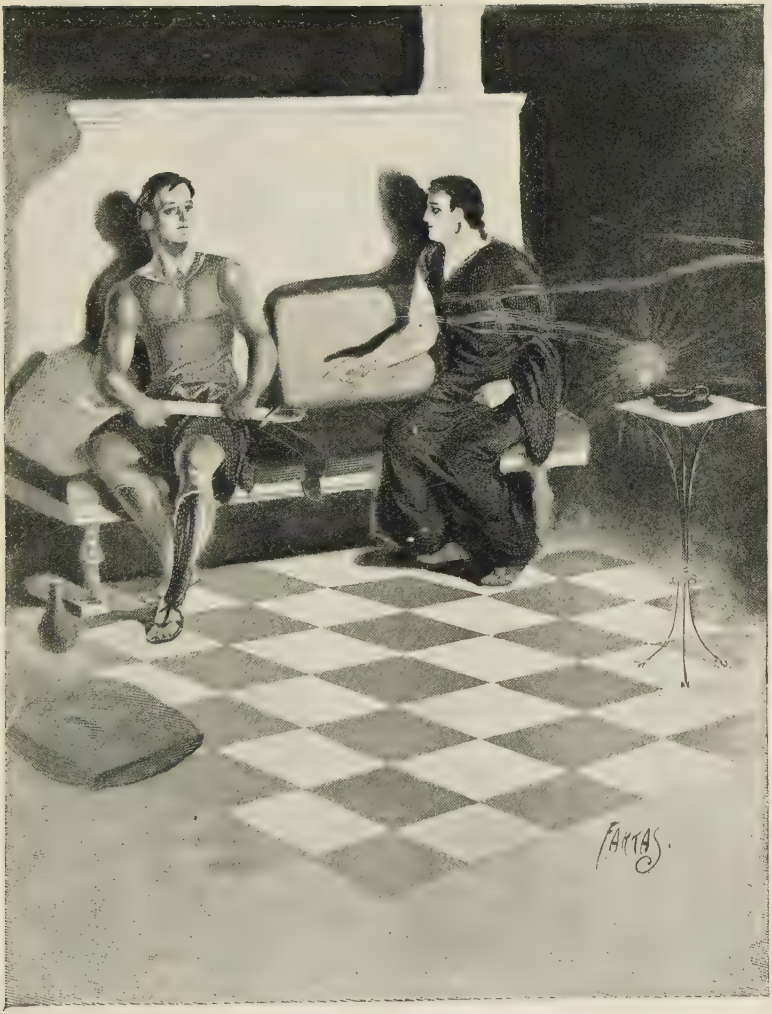
"You did not even charge him with the lie he has told?"

"I charged him with nothing."

"Will you tell me why you said nothing, why you stood silent in their presence, as if their dignity made you dumb?"

"I did not myself understand."

"Eradmus, it is time that we too should take leave of our swords. Draw forth your steel and see if it has not blushed for you. The hour will come when at these gates the mob will roar, not with the outcry of impotent voices alone, but with battering iron and



WHERE THE LAMP WAS DIM.

avenging sword. May this fury not come at a time when such as you and I are to uphold the name of Rome. The agile strength of the Campus Martius has departed from the muscles of our right arms, and unto our knees has come the weakness of Galilee. It is a spell. Let us throw it off!"

And in our determination we threw it off, and up and down we walked hard upon the stone floor, like men in the theater, playing an emergency. While we were yet walking, growing stronger at the end of each slow moment, there came an order from headquarters. Barabbas had robbed a caravan not many miles from the city, had overcome the escort, cut off the head of an army paymaster, and had made off with the silver and gold. We were to speed forth at once; and for us it was pleasant news. But in the hasty preparation a bitterness came upon me. I was to serve and not to command. The new centurion, the politician Nelius, was to lead. But it was useless to show or to feel resentment.

Down through the stone streets rang the iron of our horses. Luna arose, and the valley of the Kedron was ripe for a harvest of moonbeams. Out in the thrill of the air my spirits lifted. The night is the mother of mysticism, and now, in her very bosom, I was so much a part of her as to comprehend her

secrets. The old Egyptian was an agent of the night. The Prophet, they had said, was born beneath a star that hung low above him; and he, too, was of the night.

Out among the ancient tombs the wild dogs were howling. The clang of our brass was loud in the stillness. We passed over a hill, through an olive grove. The wavering branches sifted the moon down upon us, snowflakes of the heavens. Out into the open again, across a brook, the horses striking fire from the stones. In the hut of a vineyard worker a light was burning. As we passed near the door we heard the sounds of prayer, low and trustful. He mentioned the name of God, the Prophet's father. Surely this laborer was unacquainted with the secrets of the night. Why did he not open his door and let the darkness show to him that it was all mysticism? Afar off the stars hung low above a hill. The dogs ceased their howling. All among the ancient tombs was as quiet as the dust beneath them. If there were souls, whence had fled the souls that once inhabited that dust?

In the level road we hastened onward with greater speed. The horses were glad to be out beneath the stars. Wild asses started up and sped away, the moonlight glinting upon their bristly backs. They kicked up their

heels, but they could not throw off their riders, the moonbeams. The hours passed. The horses were slower. The day began to break. The sun flushed the east. The shadows flew away, faster than the wild asses; and the envious moon died in the heavens. And now the dewy glades flashed like great crystals shattered on the ground. The day is the father of reason. My brain was clear. I thought no more of the old Egyptian. I was a Roman soldier.

Our troop, consisting of not more than thirty men, was divided into three companies, that we might better scout the country. I was at the head of one company. Along about the middle of the afternoon a potter came out of his shop, with clay on his hands. He asked me if the robber had been taken. He said that early in the morning Barabbas had been seen not far from this place. There were a number of fierce-looking men with him. Now it seemed that the track was warm. The country was broken, with here and there a thicket of stunted trees. Out from one of these thickets there came a sudden rush, Barabbas and his men. Barabbas rode like the spirit of darkness breaking a barbaric steed. But his men, seeing that we were ready to receive them, wheeled about and fled. Their shouts had ceased and the robber knew

that he was left alone. But he was now so near us that he could not wheel his horse; and so he grazed us on the right, like a stone, glancing. He did not throw his spear. He bent low and sped as fast as his swift horse could leap the air. I was nearest him and I gave chase, but he was better mounted and he gained on me. But coming to a rough place where the ground had been washed by the rains, the horse made a great leap, and his feet seeming to tangle, he fell. Barabbas arose upon the instant and he threw his spear, but it passed me harmlessly; and then I was upon him. But he was determined, and desperately he fought with his sword. I could have killed him, for he had not been trained, but it was my desire to take him alive. And, catching quick at the chance, I struck him upon the head with the flat of my sword and felled him.

CHAPTER XXII

In the Day to Come

NOW loud the trumpet screamed, and from far across the hills an answer came. Soon Sempre's troop had galloped up, while on a hill-top not far away the centurion's company urged their horses, speeding fast to join us. The robber was bruised, but not badly hurt. One of his men had been killed, and the others had fled, leaving the hollow-sounding winds behind them. The horse of Barabbas was crippled by his fall, and we ended his wild days with the thrust of a spear. The robber was tied upon the back of one of our own horses, and then we turned our faces toward Jerusalem. I was not now listening for praise, but I looked for credit, to further my promotion; but the centurion said naught, and I knew that he was not going to speak in my behalf. It is true that my taking of the robber was due more to his misfortune than to my valor, but it is also true that had I been less skillful he might have slain me and escaped.

We halted to refresh ourselves, and it was not until the forenoon of the following day that we entered the city. When it became known that the robber had been taken and brought prisoner to Jerusalem, there was great excitement in the streets, and amid the throng that pressed forward to look upon him I recognized the Arab with whom I had traveled from Gaza.

When Barabbas had been shut up in a strong prison I went to the Tower to tell the story of his capture. Long ago I had learned that in the army there was one quality that availed nothing—the quality of modesty. The commander received me in his curtained room. On a table were the remnants of a feast. His face was red with wine. "Why have you come to deliver a report?" he demanded. "Where is your centurion? Is he killed? Do all officers die when they go out with you?"

"Sir, you have asked me more questions than I can answer," I declared myself unto him, bowing over the table almost to the level thereof. "But if you will permit me I shall be pleased to tell the story of the capture of the robber Barabbas."

Then I told him my story, and he listened with impatience, moving about restlessly as I was delivering it. "Well," he said, "and

you were afraid that the credit would not be given to you. I have forwarded your name, and that is all I can do. I have not forgotten you. You have been granted extra privileges—to come and go as you see fit. Does that count for nothing?"

He began to soften toward me. He was yielding to the mood of the wine. "You are a brave man, a good soldier, and when Rome knows that of one in her service, what else is there to know?"

He dismissed me, and as I was going out I met the centurion coming in. I stepped aside, saluting him, but he took no notice of me. Out in the courtyard I came upon Sempre. With words that were not unkind the commander had atoned for his indifference, and of him I said nothing to my friend, but I spoke of the centurion's discourtesy, and Sempre replied: "What could you expect of a politician that fancies himself in favor? When he was in the ranks he did not know how to be respectful to his superiors; he was servile. And now that he has risen, he does not know how to be dignified, but must be arrogant. Think nothing more of him. Is it not beautiful up there?" he said, pointing to the stars. "But they are a mystery, and perhaps they are whispering about a prophet that has appeared among them. And doubtless this prophet star

calls himself direct offspring of the sun. The moon might be laid claim upon as mother, but these prophets never set store on that side of the house. They do not seem to have mothers. This Galilean, they say, is the son of David, who lived in the remote ages, but they do not mention David's wife. With the assistance of Solomon, his son, I should think that David's offspring should be numerous, for it was Solomon who possessed wives and concubines enough to have supplied Aeschylus with a dozen choruses."

"Still thinking about the Prophet!" I said. "I thought that you and I were resolved to withdraw our minds from him."

"The throne of the mind is set in the noontide, in the blaze of the sun. Then reason stands forth, a challenger. But every night is a mystery, and when the challenge rings forth, for answer a shadow falls. Where the wolf howls in the forest there is no mystery, for that is the voice of hunger, the voice of the material. We understand and marvel not; but here in the night, when the murmur of trade has died, there is silence, and out of its depths comes a voice that you do not hear, but which deafens your heart with its tempestuous stillness. I have written to my father, begging him to purchase my exemption from the army. I am young, but I feel heavy

with years. Barbarians and even civilized nations have poisoned their wells, that an invading army might drink unto death, but these dews have poisoned the air. They have discovered a poison for the mind. A year ago I could not in a dream have visioned myself as I now am. You may say that it is due to ill health, but my strength will dispute that. It is my spirit that is heavy with years. I seem to have lived a thousand ages ago. But what is my spirit? A soul? Then, if I have a soul, Limprosus was wise. In Rome I could return to the superstitious and find relief in burning incense to the gods. But here I look upon such rites with the eyes of a Jew, as idolatrous. Our religion was a joy, a festival. The Jew worships sorrow, makes terror his God and grief his prophet. I mean the Jews that accept Jesus. The others still worship at the shambles. They must smell the burnt blood of the bull. I do not wish to worship sorrow. I do not wish to believe that in a long face there lies all virtue. I hear that the ruling Jews are making stronger and stronger their appeal against Jesus, to have him brought forward on a charge that may involve his life. I trust that they may succeed. In no way do I acknowledge him as the son of a god or as a prophet possessing powers beyond mortal man. But in some way he is a poisoner of the

atmosphere of men's minds, and as such he is an evil unto the state."

"In this nursery of old men we are children," said I. "In this land the youth imitates the aged. There are no games, no sports, no theaters. Here every one must live in the past, and the past was dark and full of superstition. I know the feeling that has come upon you, for, as you could but see, I have not myself escaped from it; but our distemper will soon pass away. You must not leave the army. You have been educated for it, and outside of it you are a stranger unto all the affairs of life. A man of your bravery and intelligence must eventually win fame. You remember the resolve we made. Let us make it again, stronger than before."

While I was speaking, a legionary came to me and inquired if I had received the word left for me that Limprosus was sick, and nigh unto death? The news had been brought near the noon hour. No one had told me. And now, forgetful of all except that I still loved the old soldier, I hastened to the house of the Egyptian; and when I arrived I found Belthius standing in front of the door.

"How is it with Limprosus?" I inquired, when I saw who it was, and he answered: "It is well with him." His words smote my heart, for I felt that the old Roman had not taken

leave only of his sword, but of the world as well; and with halting step I passed on into the chamber wherein Nebuces was wont to sit. And there was Limprosus, talking low and smiling upon his friends. He arose to meet me, and eagerly I ran to him; and he struck hands with me, after the vigorous manner of soldiers.

"They told me that you were sick unto death, and even now, at the door, I believed you dead!" I cried. Upon my shoulder he placed a strong hand; and feeling its weight I gazed into his countenance, and saw therein a health-hue and a youthfulness that never had he shown me before. Then I looked about me, and realized that there were present not only the Egyptian and the wife of Limprosus, and Belthius, who had followed me, but my friend Milthias. They all of them greeted me in a quiet way, but expressive of happiness; and in good humor I said that it was not seemly of them thus to lure a soldier from his duty.

"I thought that I was coming," said I, "to look upon a face cold in death, and which with its stillness would reproach me with the truth that I had not always been patient with a great heart beating no more. But I have come instead to look upon a festival of smiles. Limprosus, did you lend a hand to this?"

"Sit you down," said Limprosus, and when I had obeyed him, he, too, seated himself, and then came Eine, and sat on the floor at his feet, clasping her hands over his knee. He began to speak. "Eradmus, they spoke truly when they said that I was sick unto death But at the moment when they stood weeping over me, Jesus came and unto me He said: 'Limprosus, arise. Thou art not sick.' And then I knew that I was not; and I arose, and new blood was in my veins, and in my heart a new strength. We all of us fell upon our knees to give thanks, and when we looked up, He was gone from the midst of us."

He ceased to speak, and I sat there, feeling that they were bending their looks upon me. It was not hard to find my tongue, for it was ready enough to speak in ridicule of what I had heard, but these were my friends, and while I pitied their weakness, I did not wish to show contempt for it. So after a time I said: "Milthias, you were here?" and looking straight into my eyes, he said that he was. "I had come," said he, "to see Limprosus die, and at the very moment when he seemed dead, I saw him live anew!"

Rebellion arose in my heart, though the lamp was within and the darkness without and mysticism everywhere. "And do you believe,

Milthias, that the man Jesus did heal Limprosus?"

"I speak of what I beheld with mine eyes, Eradmus. And now I must speak what I believe—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

"But where is this God, the Father?" I cried. "Why was it necessary for him to send his son to walk wearily in the dust of the earth? Why would he make his own a wanderer? Why would he set up against him a host of enemies that daily seek his life? And if this son be powerful enough to heal the sick and to raise the dead, as I have heard, why does he not raise a temple for himself, grander than the one which he has threatened to destroy? If he heals as a proof of his claim that he is the son of God, why does he not go among men of influence? If there be a God, all of the greatness as well as all of the weakness of the world belongs to him. God must be wisdom, but if a man seek only the company of the humble and the impotent, no one disputes us if we say he is not wise."

"Eradmus," said Milthias, "it is not for us to question."

"But it is for us to question," I replied. "Reason and a desire to know the truth are the parents of question. God ought to be the source of reason and of truth And when the

Prophet passes away, how can the distant world believe in him, since he gives only to the humble the testimony of his life and his work?"

"Still I say," said Milthias, "that it is not for us to question."

During this time the Egyptian had sat enwrapped in silence, not grim, as was the wont of his race, but bright as if from the glow of a lamp within him. Now he spoke:

"O son of that mighty error, Rome," he said, "would it not be in keeping with the ways of earth to despise the meek and to pay court to the great? But there is coming a time when men that are greater than any Caesar, looking back across the vast sweep of the years, shall see this day, this city, hung about with an imperial purple that the ages shall be powerless to dim, with a glory that cannot fade! And these great men shall feel that to have lived now, in this hour—to have been permitted to bathe with their grateful tears the feet that are now covered with the dust of the weary road—feel and know that it was a privilege blessed beyond all comparison! Reason, O my generous youth, you who gave to me my freedom—reason may come with its question, but faith alone can inspire the answer. You may tell us that faith is born of ignorance, of shortness of sight, of a readiness

to believe in the spirituality of things which the eye cannot understand, and then we must tell you that faith is a wisdom that comes not out of man's knowledge, but comes he knows not whence. Faith is the inspiration of the heart. It may come unto a child or be denied to a sage. When it knocks at the door there are some that are deaf. Listen with thine ears, O son."

Rebellion was strong within me. Reason was whetting the edge of its blade. Old women might tell such stories and children might believe them. And so I arose to depart, to go out from the light of the lamp, into the dark, into the bosom of the night, but Milthias bade me stay.

"No," said Limprosus, speaking in kindly tones, "suffer him to go the way that now seems marked out for him, the roads that wind him in and about, in the night of his heart and in the darkness of his soul; for the day will soon break and the sun will rise, and in the upward and the straight pathway shall he track the earth, joyfully toward redemption. Let him go."

And so I went out from among them, and the eyes of the heavens looked they all of them upon me, and yet was I in the dark.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Great Kinsman of a Family

SEMPRE was asleep, and I did not awake him, though I longed for his strength to give aid to the rebellion within me. After a long time I slept, and I dreamed the whole night through; and always I saw the man from Galilee, with a few of his chosen ones, walking in the dust; and far away, over the lonely road, came Vloden, following him.

When the visions of the night departed, Sempre was sitting on his couch looking at me; and when I showed that no longer was I asleep, he inquired after Limprosus.

"He is well, and younger than I ever knew him before."

"Then he was not sick?"

"His friends that were gathered about him said that he was sick unto death. And his word have I also. He was lying between life and death, and his friends were weeping, for they knew that his time was come, when suddenly the man Jesus appeared in the midst of them, and with a word called him back to health!"

He looked at me as if he would force me to say what I believed. But I said nothing, and he spoke again: "You saw him well, but you did not see him sick. They are all of them mad. The Prophet and his agent, the Egyptian, have robbed them of their senses and filled their minds with moonbeams harvested in the valley of the Kedron. They have been deceived, and they in turn deceived you."

"But," said I, "Milthias was there, and he testified also."

"Milthias! Then he is mad, too. They have held his head beneath the downpour of beams from the moon. Ha! they tell you of their faith, but why must it ever be revived and strengthened, day after day, by tricks to catch and bewilder the eye? But tell me, have they made you weak with their belief? Have they netted your brain about with the strands of raveled moonbeams? Are they to make mad this fragment of an army, and in our idiocy are we to straggle out, refusing to do our duty, and give over the citadel to the cold and sane Jew, the merchant of the Temple? I shall have none of it. The nightmare came upon me, mysticism came upon me, weakness came upon me; but with the strength of a Roman I threw them all off, and now I am a man, a soldier again. Come, remember our

resolve. I have sent another letter to my father; I have told him that I wish to remain in the army. I have shown the strength of my resolve. Now show yours."

I was prepared to show my resolve, and I did. My promotion lagged, but my hope was born anew, and in the discharge of my duties I felt strong. As the time wore on, neither in the day nor in the night did I go near the house of the old Eygptian. And long after I had crossed that threshold, the coming and the going of a season, Milthias came one morning to the Tower. He sent a messenger to tell me that he was in the courtyard, and it was there that I met him. He requested me to go with him out beyond the gate, and when I had done so, but not willingly, he conducted me to the ruined wall whereon we had sat the time when he had given me to know that I was no longer free to visit his father's house. Here we seated ourselves. I waited for him to speak, and he spoke with readiness.

"I have come, Eradmus, to say that for you there is a welcome waiting in our house."

His voice was cordial and his manner was affectionate, but his words were as wasps and they stung me. Before I spoke I waited for the stinging to pass, and then I thus replied: "I did nothing that should have excluded me,

and I have done nothing that should invite my return."

His hand lay warm upon my bare arm. "Eradmus," he said, "the judgment of a father that loves his family deemed it best that you should not come. But there is something that is above all judgment—the brotherhood of man. Then there were Jews and Gentiles, but now, in the love of the Son of David, there is to be no Jew, no Gentile, for all are the family of God. Eradmus, our household has been converted to Christ. And so has my uncle, Nicodemus. He is a very learned man, and is proud, but some time ago he went secretly to discourse with Jesus and came away converted. So, you see, his friends are not alone among the poor and the humble."

"But wherefore do you tell me this, and why do you seek to give it strength by speaking of your uncle? I have not been converted to anything but my sword, my old and honored deity. And since it is you and yours alone that have embraced a new faith, why should I come to your house? You have bridged a chasm, but your timbers are too light to bear me over."

Gently he pressed my arm, and he spoke in low and earnest tones of the obligation which his family felt was lying on the house in my behalf; and over and again he said that

but for me the wilds of Britain had always been the place of his wretched abode.

"Ah," said I, "instead of this carpenter from Galilee, this Christ, I am your savior! He never would have gone to find you in old Lodbig's town. He is therefore a savior by courtesy of opportunity."

With the ending of my last word he snatched his hand from my arm, and sat back from me, and I knew that in his ever-ready judgment I had been guilty of blasphemy; but his friendship for me was such that even in the severity of his creed, new or old, he forgave me, though he said not a word, and I did not turn my face toward him, but looked out over the city, down through the grim and cheerless streets. And it appeared that now there was an unwonted stir among the people and a jostling of camels. From afar off, over hills and out of the valleys, strangers were coming, and I could discern that they were arrayed not in the coarse raiment of trade, but were clothed, many of them, in apparel that appeared to be rich. I inquired of Milthias whether he knew the cause of this, the assembling of such a multitude, and he answered that they were come to the feast of the Passover. I was still in ignorance, but supposed it to be some sort of ancient Jewish festival, in which a Roman could take no interest, and I therefore

questioned him no further. But I waited for him to say more, not in explanation of the Passover, but relative to his coming to see me, and as he did not, I arose as if to dismiss him. Now it was that he looked so sad as he sat there that I had not the heart to turn away from him. I thought of the time when he had come walking up to me in Vloden's field, when I wore a chain about my ankles, when wild men were in readiness to throw spears through my body. And I was about to speak when he said:

"You are impatient with me now, Eradmus, and in your mind the cause is alive, but the time is coming when in the love of the Galilean we shall be closer than brothers."

"But I do not desire to become brother if I must first become all Jew and no Roman," I replied, still moved by the sadness of his face, it was true, but remembering that I was always the one who must conform. "You frame your own belief and say to me: 'Accept of it and then I will accept of you.' And when you change your principles, I must change also. Would it not be more brotherly to accept of a part of that which I offer, and mingle it with the part which you have to offer me?"

He answered with a smile, saying that brothers would not remain long apart if they were generous enough to meet half-way.

Then he arose and embraced me, and I heard the laughter of a soldier on the battlement, and I felt ashamed that a Roman should see me, even as Milthias and his sister had been ashamed to walk with me when the ruling Jews were looking at them.

He asked me if I would not come again to his father's house, to meet my friends, Limprosus and the Egyptian, who came in the evening to hold discourse there? And I answered that I would come. So I went with him, and we sat, all of us, Limprosus, his wife and Nebuces, by the fire, for the weather was cold. The discourse was not indeed a discourse, but orations on the Prophet, delivered by one and then the other; and while we were thus sitting in the light of the fire, there came Nicodemus, the brother of Leboac. But when he saw that a Roman soldier was present, he was loath to join with the company, but Milthias went to him and talked in a low tone to him, and then he came forward and made one of us there about the fire. He was a man of shrewd intelligence, and spoke with much caution, weighing his words, and looking about him lest some one not of the company should hear him and misinterpret his words. A man of less learning could have said in a short time what it took him a long time to say. His words did not mean more than the words

of other men, but he seemed to think that they did, for he spoke them as if he were giving them a new and more important birth. He asked me what I as a Roman thought of the Jewish Prophet, and I answered him that I was not there as an advocate of the man Jesus, but to visit my friend Milthias. He appeared to like my caution, which was not caution but the outspoken truth, and he stroked his silken beard and looked wise. After the coming of the great man the rest of the company was not given much to talk, preferring to listen to him, but I should have listened with more of interest to Amana, the daughter of the house, for her words, like buds, burst out each one in the proper place. Leboac was cautious, too; but I wondered at Limprosus, who had always been so ready with argument, and at Nebuces, who was, I well knew, much wiser than Nicodemus. They were all ready, for the most part, to call man brother, but the shadow of authority was still hanging above them, though it was the self-importance of Nicodemus that rendered him great.

I made bold to inquire as to his own impressions of the Prophet, and he looked about him and stroked his beard. They all of them bent their eyes upon him, wondering, no doubt, whether he would say something stronger than before, for it was evident that Leboac

and his wife desired to reinforce their own convictions with encouragements that he might give to them. He said that it was easier to believe than not to believe. "You must know, youth," he said to me, "that we have expected a king. That we do not find him in the Prophet is a disappointment, but that we have a prophet at all, after so many years, when it seemed that Jehovah had forgotten Israel, ought to be a cause for great rejoicing. I do not lay such store upon His miracles, for possibly they might be wrought by peculiar agencies, but I was well pleased with His answers to certain questions, proving to me that he was a man of deep meditation."

The old Roman and the Egyptian looked at each other. Limprosus spoke.

"You are a wise man, Nicodemus. You have garnered the prophecies of the men of old. You have been careful to obey the law. You have not permitted your white vestures to be specked by the world. You have feared the Lord. And when the Prophet came, you searched your book and then demanded proof of Him. That was well. It was in accordance with your life and the lives of your fathers. With me it was not the same. I was the servant of the sword. You were the servant of the book. My light was the glint of steel. You carried a lamp. I read philosophers,

Plato and the rest, and I found that the wisdom which vaguely the philosophers guessed at, Jesus made clear. From a godless source, I came swiftly to the truth. There were no entanglements. You were beset with doctrines, and the truth appeared too simple. I became as a child. You wished to remain as a doctor. You expected that the Prophet of God would speak in thunder. He spoke in gentle breezes."

Nicodemus stood up. We all stood up. Nicodemus sat down and so did we. Did I say all? Limprosus and the Egyptian did not arise. I arose because my friend, in whose house I was a guest, arose to do honor to his uncle. I would honor my friend. We all of us expected that Nicodemus would deliver to Limprosus a frown in words, but he bent his not unkindly eyes on him and said: "There is much truth in what you have said."

I did not remain long after this. I bade them farewell and took my course to the Tower. From the desert a raw wind was blowing. The streets were thronged with strangers. They were making ready for the feast of the Passover.

CHAPTER XXIV

They Were Strong

IT was not long after I saw Nicodemus at the house of Leboac, surely not more than a day and a night, when my commission as centurion was given to me. It was evening when the honor was conferred. I was arrayed in the garb of my office and into my hand was given the rod, wound about with a golden vine. The soldiers applauded, for they knew that I had earned the honor, and Sempre, whom we all of us felt was in the line of promotion, seized me by the hand, and into my ear he spoke: "Remember our resolve!" I smiled upon him in my happiness, telling him that I remembered; and he said that he had with pleasure observed my strength. Without a feeling of disrespect I withdrew from every one and went forth upon the battlements, to be alone and to muse over Vloden, for now she seemed near unto me. Down the vista of speculation I could see myself, still further honored with promotion, marching with a legion toward old Lodbig's town.

TO BE ALONE AND TO MUSE OVER VLODEN.

From the desert the wind blew cold, but I stood strong against it, looking, as I supposed, toward Britain; and in the glowing of a light, off in some distant vacant place, I saw the gleaming of the moon on the handful of snow that the wondrous maiden of the woods had held out to me. Suddenly my musing and my pictures, gathered in the dark and made light in my own bosom, were driven away by noises in the streets, the shouting and the hooting of a great mob. Hundreds of torches and lanterns glowed and swayed in the air. Surely there must be an insurrection; and in this belief, I hastened to the commander of the citadel to apprise him; but at the door I was met by an officer who said that he had just delivered a report that the man Jesus had been arrested by the Jews. I went below and stood without the wall, but seeing no one, I went farther down toward the city. Now I could hear occasional outbursts from the mob, more savage than the yells of the Britons, more heartless than the howl of Rome. Farther down I halted again, for at such a time, when every man might be needed, I did not dare to go beyond an emergency call from the citadel. Here I stood, waiting for I knew not what, for Limprosus, yea, for him to appeal to the Romans. He had not heard that I was a

centurion, that my honors were as a new leaf upon me. If I could only see him, and go with him before the commander to put his appeal with my own, he might essay again to seize his sword. The heartless wretches roared and roared again, and how I yearned to charge them with the men whom I had commanded in the mountains, men who would singe the very beard of death! But no one came. All was quiet save in that one fury pot, boiling not so far away, near indeed, but too remote while with my men I could not reach it. I returned into the citadel and talked with the commander, and he answered that Pilate was in the city and that if I wished to kill Jews I must appeal to him.

"It is not so much that I desire to kill Jews as it is to save an innocent man," said I. And taking up a book that he had been reading, which I should have thought was the art of quieting rather than of exciting soldiers to deeds of valor, he said: "I admire your zeal; I admire the zeal and the spirit of all young men, but it is not wise to become embroiled with those Jews. Beware of the man when he fears that his god has forsaken him. But you need have no fear of them putting this man to death. They may try him by such law as is left unto them, and may turn him out of the Synagogue—a frightful calamity to contem-

plate," he added with a smile, "but they cannot condemn him to death. And, besides, if he is a prophet and has all power, why should you be alarmed? Can he not scatter his enemies as if they were winter leaves?"

Now was I ashamed that I had appealed to him. I did not wish to be classed among the supporters of the Prophet. My resolution was strong. I was to be the conqueror of Britain. Therefore I bowed, and begged the commander not to think me the adherent of any men other than the rulers of Rome. And so I went out from his presence. But I was wrought upon, and did not feel that there was sleep for me that night. I thought of Limprosus and of the old Egyptian. I wondered whether the repentant woman who now loved the old soldier would fall off in her regard and her reformation when she should know that the One who brought the change upon her heart could, like a common criminal, be dragged about the streets. Again I went out and stood for a long time, and now all was quiet. I saw a man coming up the hill, toward the gate. He halted and seemed, with hands clasped, to be gazing at the Temple. He came nearer and I spoke to him. He stood still and I went to him. The sky was not dark. I saw his white beard. He spoke, and I recognized Nicodemus.

"His friends are all of them scattered like sheep when beset by the wolves," he said. "Judas, his disciple, betrayed him. Some of them have sworn that they did not know him."

"What have they done with him?" I inquired.

"They are preparing to take him before Pilate. They demand his life. They spit on his friends. They beat the Master and revile him. It was an awful, a shameful sight, there at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. They brought witness against him, and in the meshes of their own falsehood they entangled themselves. Those who shouted when he came into the city, riding an ass, now hooted and cried for his blood. May it well have been said, 'O ye generation of vipers.' But youth, I must not be seen here. I must be seen nowhere, for some of them may think that I gave him my countenance."

He turned away, looking upward at the Temple, and so I left him.

Early in the morning, I was ordered to report to Pilate with a detail of men. This I proceeded immediately to do, selecting Sempre as one of the legionaries. "Remember our resolve," I said, as we were filing through the gate, and he looked at me with a smile and thus replied: "I am not a mystic; I am a Roman."

Before we arrived at the Palace the prisoner, Jesus, had been taken into the Hall of Judgment. The Jews were crowded about the door. They believed that to enter the place would defile them. How careful man is of the appearance of his robe! Pilate had evidently found it difficult, on account of the fear of this defilement, to bring forward witnesses. As the soldiers were about to enter, the Procurator came to the door. I saluted him, reporting for duty. He waved his hand, the ruffians who, bolder than the rest, were in the entrance, made way and I filed the soldiers into the hall. For a time the Procurator stood, expostulating with the angry mob, urging the fanatics to specify the crime that the man had committed; and they cried out that he was a disturber of the peace, an enemy of the people.

"But what has he done?" Pilate demanded.

"He has brought shame upon us! He has called himself our king!"

Then, returning into the hall, Pilate commanded Jesus to answer such questions as he should put to him; and Jesus, who stood there, worn and sorrowful, looked at him in meekness, but in his countenance there was no fear. All about him was sadness, his garments, his sandals, his brown hair falling on his shoulders, in which there were tangles made by rude

hands—all a weight of grief that appeared to be bearing him slowly to the earth. And yet he was not bowed. It was his spirit that drooped. But now I could not search my heart for pity. He was to be tried, if tried at all, not to answer to the charge of having violated some visionary text of the Jewish creed, but to defend himself against a more serious accusation, that of having broken the Roman law. For a moment Pilate looked at him, seeming to feel sorry for him, and as if he knew not a vital question to ask, inquired of him if he were the king of the Jews. He must have known that such a charge, if not ridiculous, was full of pity, the man was so worn, so weak, so pale, so sorrowful—with no man to defend him, not indeed with a sword, but with even a word. But Pilate put the question, and I did not catch the full answer, there was such an uproar without, but I understood Jesus to answer question with question inquiring of Pilate whether he himself supposed him a king or had been told so by others?

Some one touched me—Limprosus. He was not one to fear defilement. His face looked as I had seen it when we fought the Britons, hard-set and grim. I cautioned him not to speak. We both of us listened, for Jesus was saying that his kingdom was not of

this earth, and Limprosus whispered: "With a simple truth he has overturned all that his enemies have set up against him. And mark you, Eradmus, do you this for me: When Pilate shall have liberated him, grant him escort out beyond the gates of the city, for his enemies, in their disappointment, will stone him."

"But where is his miraculous power?" I inquired of Limprosus.

And the old soldier, with grimness on his lips, but with tenderness in his eyes, thus answered me: "He will not put it forth to save himself. Listen. He says that he is a king, and when he has said this, there are some of us who understand—that his kingdom is of the soul. Pilate goes out again. He can find no fault in him."

And thus it was that the Procurator spoke to the foaming throng without, that in the man there was no evil. But the Jews cried aloud, and I could hear them as, in their rage, they stamped upon the ground. Some one shouted the name of Galilee; and Pilate, inquiring whether Jesus were a Galilean, and receiving answer that he was, ordered that he be taken before Herod, who, by some sort of courtesy, was called king. And Pilate called me to him, and in a low tone said: "By good fortune Herod is in Jerusalem. Go you with

your soldiers and see to it that this man is safely delivered to him."

It was of no need to command him, for Jesus obeyed at once, meekly doing all that he was told to do; and when he appeared, walking in the midst of the soldiers, the ruffians rent the very clouds with the fury of their cries, and but for the soldiers they would have torn him to pieces. I looked about for Limprosus, fearing that he might be recognized as a friend of the Prophet and stoned, but nowhere was he to be seen, so great was the writhing multitude, tangling like bearded wheat in a whirlwind. The streets were so thronged that it was with hard effort that we could pass through. The tops of the houses were packed with people, some of them uttering wild and bloodthirsty cries, but some moaned aloud and smote their breasts. The distance was not great, but it was some time before we reached the palace wherein Herod had taken up his almost mimic court. He was exceedingly pleased that Pilate, his enemy, should have conferred so great an honor upon him, and he spoke with merriment in his voice, saying that he had heard much concerning Jesus, and that he would now amuse his friends with miracles wrought by him. Then, still further moved by the spirit of jest, he began to ply Jesus with questions, but the

prisoner answered him never a word. He seemed to be looking afar off; and in his eyes there was a sorrowful dreaminess. With this unconcern was Herod wroth, and he reviled Jesus, saying to him: "Where is your skill now, Nazarene? Canst thou heal a broken vow or call back to life a jest that is dead?" But Jesus answered not a word. "Ah, will you offer no entertainment to the company? You would rather stand silent in your pale reproach! Centurion, return with him to Pilate, and present to the Procurator the assurances of my friendship."

Now the fanatics were more enraged than before, and as we were conducting Jesus out into the street, one of them shook his clenched hand in Sempre's face and cried out: "Are we children thus to be played with?" And as he should have known that this was in no wise a current to be turned at will by a common soldier, I ordered Sempre to strike him to the ground, which would have been done with keen relish had not the wretch escaped in the crowd.

During all of this time Jesus had not seemed to look at me, as he had done when he stood on the steps of the ruined porch, far out in the country; but of this I was not regretful, for his eyes were so stricken with grief that I did not wish to have them turned full into my own.

As we drew near unto the palace the mob roared louder, as if to intimidate Pilate into granting the demands of the people, whatever they might be; and an officious black-beard, well clothed but of evil countenance, pushed forward with the branch of a tree in his hand, and cried out that he would belabor Jesus into the judgment hall; but one of the soldiers struck the branch out of his hand.

"Our resolve is still strong," Sempre said to me. And I answered: "My resolve is Britain, and you are to go with me."

Now when we came back to Pilate he was much cast down, nor did the compliments and good wishes sent by Herod raise his spirits, though he pretended to be pleased. Again he addressed himself to the heartless people, declaring that he had found no fault in the man, and that Herod, with perhaps a better understanding of the nature of the offense, had been unable to see aught in him worthy of punishment. Therefore Pilate announced that, as there was no cause for severe measures, he would chastise the prisoner and let him go. Hereupon the fury broke out afresh, and for a time it looked as if my men would be forced to restore order with their spears.

It was a custom, why observed or why instituted I know not, that at the feast the Proc-

urator should release unto the people any prisoner whom they desired, and now they began to call for Barabbas. Pilate knew that this man had given us great trouble, that he was not only a robber, but an insurrectionist as well; and I was surprised that he listened with any degree of patience to their lawless demands; but he did listen, even as he sat upon the judgment-seat. While he was meditating, a message came from Procla, his wife, entreating him not to sentence Jesus, that in her dreams she had suffered on his account. Sempre moved over nearer to me, taking the place of another soldier, and found occasion briefly to whisper:

"She has heard that Caesar's wife had a dream."

"But the two dreams are not akin," I replied. "One was of the ruler of the earth. The other—not ruler of even the dust on his sandals."

Again I heard the robber's name, and loud arose the cry that Barabbas should be released, and Pilate, moving uneasily in his judgment-seat, inquired as to what he should do with Jesus, and in a wild roar the people demanded that he should be crucified. It was of no avail to reason with them. Every mouth was open and every ear was closed. I thought that the Procurator was wanting in firmness, and the

shrewd Jews, feeling his weakness, pressed him hard when he wavered. Suddenly he turned about, as if he had reached a decision, and then astonished me by calling for a basin of water; and when it had been brought he washed his hands and declared himself innocent of the blood of this just man. But was washing his hands clearing his skirts? Could he not see that the prisoner was in need of his protection? The people raved. They swore that they were the ones to wash their hands, if need be. They assumed all responsibility for the blood, be it innocent or guilty. They and their children would bear the odium of the blood of this "king of the Jews." Pilate then ordered the release of Barabbas. Jesus was scourged, still the god of grief, but the god of silent grief, for no sound did he utter. And then I ordered the soldiers to close in about him, and we took him into the common hall. Now it was a pastime and a sport with the soldiers, for Jesus was a Jew, and between the Romans and the Jews the racial hatred was growing daily stronger. I let them have their way; in the liberality of my fresh authority I was presenting to them a new game, here in this saddened land, where there were no amusements. They stripped him and arrayed him in an old scarlet robe, in mockery of his royalty, and they laughed to see so sorrowful

a king. Then Sempre came to me with a crown of thorns in his hand that hastily he had plaited, and holding it out toward me, he said: "Is your resolve still strong? Remember the weakness that came out of the mystic night. Here is the king of the lamp within and the darkness without. Dare you crown him?"

A cold shudder seized me. In my heart all pity died, frozen to death; and I took the crown and, going to Jesus, said to him that the hour for his coronation was come, and he said never a word, and neither did he look at me. And I placed the crown on his head, and he moved not; and I pressed down upon the thorns, and he looked at me—looked into my eyes, and my God, I heard the groaning of my heart within me! It was a look so tender, so full of pity, of forgiveness, that I shut my eyes and moved back from him, but still I saw that soft and forgiving look, and blood coming up about a thorn, and something within me was almost bursting. I heard the wild roar of the Jews, but louder still was that cry from within, and my knees smote one against the other, and it seemed that the world could hear them, and in my ears was a great rushing of water; I heard the winds of Britain, but above all was that wild cry within!

Sempre put his hand upon me, and I stag-

gered, but I struggled and stood still. "Look ye," he cried, as if in a frenzy; "look ye, I have delivered unto him his scepter." And I saw that he had put a reed into the hand of Jesus; and now the soldiers bowed before him and called him the King of the Jews. "But why do you not hail to the king you have crowned?" Sempre cried, but I answered him not, so hard was the something within me striving to burst my bosom. But soon within me fell a silence, broken only by the midnight howling of a wolf, on the shores of a wild country. Was it the death-gasping of a soul? I heard Pilate speak. He had come again to question the doomed man; and my duty as a Roman arose before me, and I would do it, trample as I might upon my own soul; but as the Procurator came near to me, I said to him: "The man is innocent."

"Yea, of any charge whatsoever," Pilate replied, "but the Jews are mad and know not the meaning of justice. Our force is small."

"But valiant," I replied.

"True, but we should be overpowered, and the cause of Rome would suffer."

I realized this, and I was resolved to do my duty. The loud cry within me, the howling of the wolf, was no more. All was cold silence now.

Pilate talked with Jesus, but I stood apart

from them and did not hear what was said. Outside there arose a shout for Caesar, and I looked at the Procurator and saw that his face was pale. Jesus was now taken into the hall of the Pavement, and I did not dare to look into his eyes, trembling in dread lest again I should see that pity—for me. When Pilate had sat down, he said unto the people: "Jews, behold your king." And they clamored for his blood. They cried out that they had no king but Caesar. Pilate leaned his head upon his hand and meditated. But he was not willing to risk the life of every man in the garrison; so he yielded and gave over Jesus to be crucified under the Roman law, and the crowd burst forth in an exultant shout. As I was passing out at the head of my troop of soldiers, to conduct Rome's part of the pitiable execution, some one plucked me by the sleeve. It was Barabbas.

CHAPTER XXV

Echoing Throughout the World

I LOOKED at the robber, and in my eye he must have read a warning to keep beyond the limit of my reach. Rome had liberated him, the insurrectionist, the murderer; and over me, his captor, he now would triumph with insolence and leers. The strong, the exculpated that another might suffer, it was small justice that he should bear the cross for the frail and the innocent; and I had it in mind thus to force him, but in the great press of the crowd he escaped.

When we arrived at the place where the crosses were to be taken up, two thieves, who had been condemned, were strong under their wood, but the shame-intended tree, the cross on which innocence was to die, proved too great a burden. Against the exhaustion, the fainting, the sublime collapse of patience, a heart of common stone might not have stood, but unmoved were the hearts of those whose flint-bosomed creed in madness howled for blood. But strong shoulders were impressed. Onward up the hill on whose summit death

in all his horror sat enthroned. The multitude of sorrow, anguish and of madmen, seemed to shake the outraged fabric of the earth; and down the valley the rumble echoed—down throughout all time, in ceaseless waves, to roll across the ocean of eternity. And as the ages pile one upon another, this story shall be writ with pens plucked from a golden eagle's wing; yea, and more, it shall be told by the lowly heart of man. Rudely must I give my own impressions.

I heard the mourning of women, the sobbing of men; and there was one sob that seemed never-ending—the grim, silent sob within myself. I saw the cross put down; I heard the rattle of the nails. I turned away, but I heard the first blow of the hammer—I heard the echo, rumbling down the valley—rumbling throughout the world. I saw the cross as it was lifted, yet I did not look up into that Face; I heard the soldiers casting dice for the raiment; I heard them shout the name of the winner. A gentle, sorrowing arm encircled me, and I knew that old Limprosus was there. The time passed and there was a hush, save for the mourning of women and the cry of a little child held in the arms of its mother. I looked about to find Limprosus, and I saw him, not far away, holding his wife by the hand. A Jewish ruler, fine in new linen, came

to me, and objected to an inscription which Pilate had written, and which now for the first time I noticed had been placed above the head of Jesus.

"Go to Pilate," I said to him.

"But would it not be better to modify the statement?" he insisted. "Let it be altered so as to read that he called himself the King of the Jews."

"Go to Pilate," I repeated, and he hastened away, and I saw him no more.

Just before darkness fell I looked up into those eyes, and there was in them the same look of pity and forgiveness. I bowed my head low and waited for the end, which came soon, for Jesus cried out in a loud voice and was dead; and something within me also cried out so that all might hear: "Truly we have crucified the Son of God." And as a shudder seemed to shake the earth, I saw Limprosus start toward me; and with him came a man. My poor old grief-stricken friend said to me: "Eradmus, this is Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable man, who begs the body of Jesus that he may entomb it."

"Sir," I said, speaking to Joseph, "I cannot without authority grant your request, but I will go with you to Pilate and intercede for you."

He thanked me, and said that we should go

at once; and as we turned about, Limprosus came after me. "Eradmus," he said, "I have seen many a crucifixion, and I know that it is the custom to break the arms and the legs of a victim taken from the cross. Will you order that this shall not be wrought upon the body of Jesus?"

And so I gave orders to a lieutenant, but he said: "I beg pardon for offering a suggestion, sir, but the law demands that the condemned shall be dead. Shall we, therefore, thrust the god-man with a spear?"

"Do as the law requires, but see that no bones shall be broken," I replied. "Attend you to it."

As we were entering the palace, some one drew me aside, but Joseph, halting not, went forward to make his request. Pilate, seeing me, called me, and when I had presented myself, he appeared to be surprised that the end had come so soon, and he inquired: "Has he been any while dead?" And when I assured him that life had surely departed some time before, he granted the body to the man Joseph.

"Hold a moment," the Procurator said to me, and when Joseph was gone, and when Pilate for a time had walked up and down as if his mind was troubled, he came near and said:

"You saw him die?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"How died he?"

"Like a god."

He turned away, but I stood waiting, for nothing that I expected, but in a cold irresolution that had settled upon me. The Procurator spoke again: "You are the young man that saved the day in the mountains out near Nain, are you not?"

I bowed to him.

He regarded me closely. "You have a career waiting in the future for you. You will stand upon a hill-top and look out over victory. You will command armies."

He said nothing more, and I thanked him and withdrew. My work was done. My duty had called upon me to see that a noble life should end, and now all nature seemed to have been changed. The city was silent. The mad cries were all of them hushed. Frenzy had supped on blood, and, gorged to sluggishness, had stretched itself in bestial sleep.

Weary and worn, with a heart dead except for its aching, I went to my quarters in the Tower. The brazen lamp was lighted and—in it I saw that look, that soft light of pity. Nowhere was there a sound; the world was wrapped in mournfulness. I had need of a friend, and I thought of Limprosus, of

Milthias. Ah, I wondered what had become of Milthias? But there was Sempre, not far away—strong in his resolve, no doubt, a Roman. But I was not strong, not a Roman; I was outcast. I sent an orderly to request Sempre to come to me. He came, and his face was white, and his eyes looked as if he were dead.

"We were strong," he gasped, as he sat down beside me, and took my cold hand. "We were strong enough to murder a god."

I said nothing; I sat looking at the soft light of the lamp.

"We were forced to do our duty as soldiers," he said. "But, O my friend, we were not forced to go beyond that—to mock Him, to crown Him with thorns."

The light of the lamp was soft. It was as soft as a smile of forgiveness. "It *is* that smile of forgiveness," I cried. And Sempre clutched my arm, bowed his head, and wept.

CHAPTER XXVI

Conclusion

THE days were slow and heavy. My duties were irksome, and when not engaged, I sat alone, going rarely out into the city, now so hung with gloom. But once I went to the home of Milthias, and though I knocked hard upon the portals, yet came there no sound from within. The Egyptian's house was closed. Limprosus was gone. Sometimes I walked in a garden, out beyond the walls; and once I passed near the tomb where the man Joseph had sealed in rock the body of the innocent and the forgiving. I saw the gleam of the Roman spears; I heard a sad bird sound its note. A legionary saluted, and I passed on, a war-man seeking peace. I thought of what Pilate had said, that I should on a hill-top stand and view a victory. But the eagle had shed the feathers of his glory, and gaunt as a famine he perched upon the very name of Rome. But I must on. They had taught me how to kill, and slaughter was my trade.

Another day. I longed for Limprosus, and thinking that surely he must have returned, I walked forth toward his house. Ah, but what was this strange whispering? The Jews were wagging their heads, and were muttering, but hushed as I drew near. I saw a woman whose face was lighted with joy. I saw an old man sink upon his knees; and, holding up his trembling hands, he cried, "The Son of Man doth live." Some one seized me by the hand—Belthius. He was striving to control himself. But had his eyes been able to speak, they would have shouted.

"What means this, Belthius? Yonder kneeling patriarch speaks of the Son of Man—that he lives. Did they not call Jesus the Son of Man? And is it not to the shame of Rome that I saw him die?"

"You saw him die, but he lives again," Belthius replied. "He has arisen."

"Belthius, why do you say such things? Did I not see the tomb where he was sealed up?"

"Have you seen the soldiers that were on guard there?" Belthius inquired. "Seek them."

I returned to the Tower and inquired for the officer of the guard that had been set to watch the tomb. He came to me. He said that he had reported to the commander. I

asked him to tell me what he had seen, and he said that just before daylight there had come a flash as if out of the sky. "I and all the rest of us fell as if struck by lightning," said he. "And when we awoke as if from a deep sleep, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. That is all I know, sir."

"But did you see any men? Did you hear any voices? Are you sure that you were not blinded by some sort of light so that the body might be stolen away?"

"I was blinded by a light, sir, and I fell senseless. I heard nothing until I came to."

"And then what did you hear?"

"The murmuring of the soldiers about me, sir. That was all."

"Then what did you do?"

"We hastened away."

"You tell a strange story."

I dismissed the officer and again I set forth to find Limprosus. Gods may be slain, but I asked myself how could gods arise from the dead?

In the Egyptian's house I found Limprosus, his wife and Milthias. The old soldier arose and saluted me. "We were blind," he said. "We could not understand him. It was not given to us—it was not our fault—not your fault, Eradmus."

"But, ah," I said bitterly, "it was my fault that I pressed the crown of thorns upon his head."

"No," said Limprosus, "it was not your fault. What has been, had to be. It was so ordered. Now all is as plain as day." He put his arms about me and once more gave me a soldier's embrace. "Now I must bid you farewell. I know my duty. I am a soldier, not of the sword, but of the cross, the redemption of man."

He took his wife by the hand. She looked up at him with a smile. "I am ready," she said. I asked him whither he was going, and he gestured with a sweep of his hand. "Throughout the world. The Egyptian is gone to preach the word to downtrodden man. A candle has been lighted where there was darkness—darkness and poverty. The poor at last have a friend, for the first time in the history of the world. You saw him die—but he has arisen. I have seen him. Eradmus, my brother, farewell."

I urged him to stay, to tell me more of Jesus, if he had been seen alive, but he shook his head. "He liveth. This is all that I must say to you I must hasten to take the word to those who have never seen him. Milthias, farewell."

He led his wife away. She looked back

and smiled upon us. "Milthias," said I, "what do you believe?"

"Ah, and has it come again to that, Eradmus? Let us not now walk with our eyes closed. I was blind and you were blind, but now we ought to see alike. Let us view the truth."

"But," said I, "if you regard the report that he has arisen as the truth, it is harder than ever to believe. I agree that he was a God, the son of your God, but I cannot believe that he is alive. It is against nature."

"No more against nature than for him to be a god and die," Milthias replied. "But the time for all argument is past."

"But your father and mother—your uncle? Do they believe?"

"They went out into the country on the day of the crucifixion and have not returned. Shall we go now? I must lock this house and take the key to the owner."

We went out and he locked the door. His way turned in an opposite direction from mine, and I did not go with him; I went to the Tower, found the officer of the watch and again I talked to him, but could learn nothing except that a light had flashed from the sky.

. . . . . .

In the evening I went out beyond the walls, to walk in the garden, alone. The sky was

dark. The soft air was moaning amid the leaves. Suddenly I saw a light, softer than the lamp. I looked up and it was in the air, above me—a small circle, a nimbus—and in this soft radiance was that same smile of forgiveness—those eyes. And down I sank upon my knees, and over I bowed until my head touched the earth. And I heard a Voice: "Eradmus, son of the swordmaker, put aside thy sword and follow me."

I arose, and the light was not in the air—it was in my heart; and now with a love for all the world, I hastened to the Tower, feeling that a thousand suns were rising. Upon a piece of parchment I wrote, and hastened into the commander's room and handed it to him.

He looked up in surprise. "Is it possible that you would resign now—when so much is promised you?" he said. "You know not what you do."

"I resign because so much is promised me. I must bid you farewell."

I left him looking at the parchment, as if he knew not what to make of it; and I hastened into my own quarters. Then I took my sword, the sword made for me by old Calo, and I wrapped it in a scarlet cloth and went out into the courtyard, searching for Sempre. I found him near the gate. "I know," he said. "I know."

"My resolve is strong," I spoke, and he put his arms about me. "Eradmus, I shall follow on when the time comes." And so, I left him.

I found a lantern and lighted it, and then I went forth again, through the gate, bidding the poor sentry good-bye. And into the garden I walked again, looking for the place where I had knelt upon the ground. When I had found the spot, I hung the lantern on the broken branch of a tree and unwrapped the scarlet cloth from about the sword, and with the sword I dug its own grave. Then I enshrouded the sword again in the scarlet cloth and placed it in the grave and raked in the earth, pressing it down hard. "So may all hate be buried," I said as I arose. And there stood some one in the light of the lantern—a woman—Vloden. I cried aloud with joy, and took her in my arms, and my lips were pressed against her lips, there in the garden, in the soft light. But I could not understand how she had come there. "I threw away my kingdom to follow you, O my heart," she said. "I took the gold that was mine, and with three slaves I came away, telling them that if I found you, they should have their liberty. We went to Gaul, and it was a long time before we found out whither you had gone; but finally they told us; and I came on a ship and then across the desert. And even now,

as we were coming along the road, my faithful slaves and I, we saw you come in through the garden gate. And I gave the gold, what was left, to the slaves, and told them that they were free." She pressed her cheek against mine, and sweet was the music when she said: "O my heart, I have given my kingdom for this moment!"

She did not know what it was to doubt me, and the world was one great sunrise. Then I told her that I was no longer a Roman soldier. "There is another Master now," I said, "the Master of tenderness and of love." And with her arms about my neck she said: "Your Master shall be mine, O Eradmus."

And by the hand I took her, even as old Limprosus had taken his wife by the hand; and out of the garden I led her, out into the highway, out into the world of God!

THE END